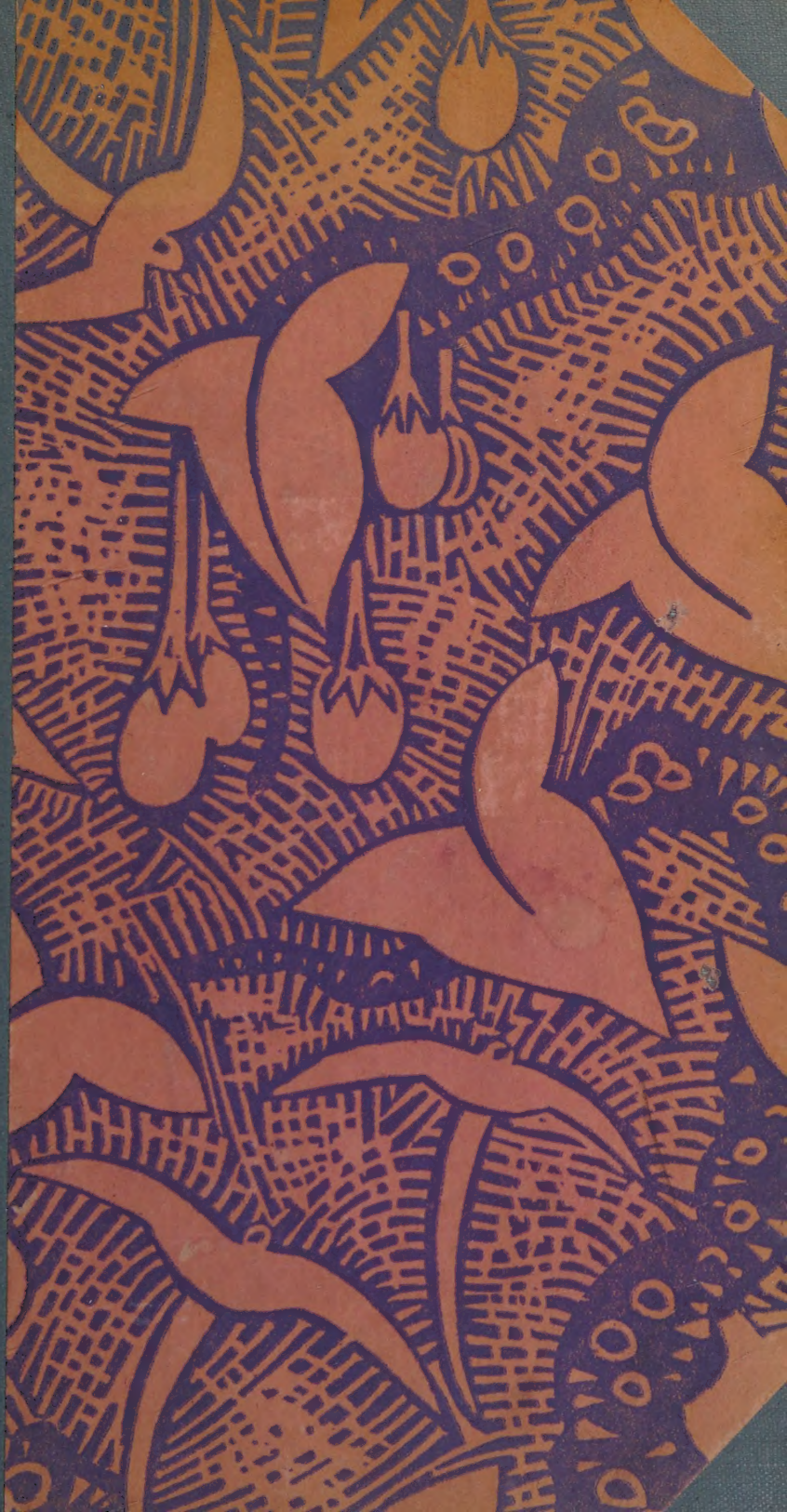
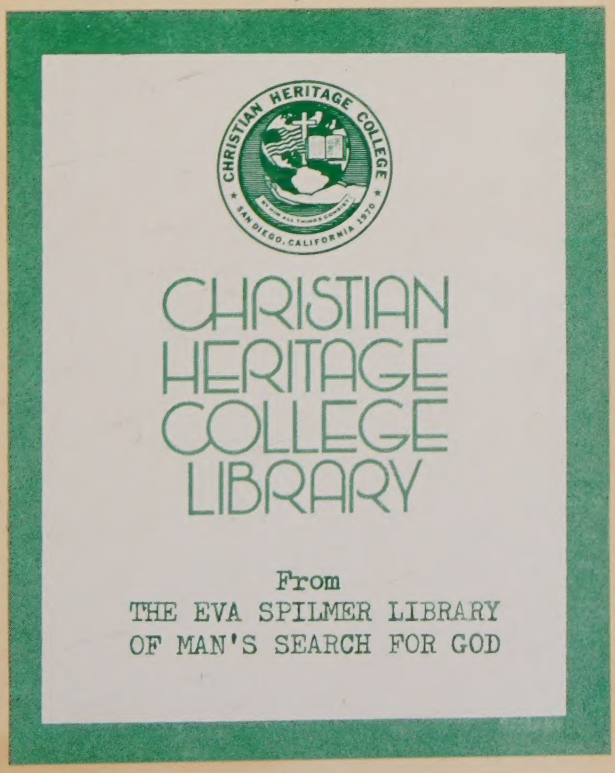


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THE DANCE OVER FIRE AND WATER

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THE DANCE OVER FIRE AND WATER

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THE DANCE OVER FIRE AND WATER

By ELIE FAURE

Authorized Translation by

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER



One should take things tragically,
nothing seriously.

MYSELF.

NEW YORK *and* LONDON
Harper & Brothers Publishers
1926

THE DANCE OVER FIRE AND WATER

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Printed in the United States of America

First Edition in English B-A

TO

MICHEL EYQUEM

LORD OF MONTAIGNE

"ADMIRABLE GOSSIP"

AND MY FRIEND

37976

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THE DANCE OVER FIRE AND WATER

PREPARATORY

THE war in which this world is still half plunged has shown us that we possess in ourselves an inconceivable power. Will this power go on until it creates a final state of peace? I would say yes, if I believed that it were possible for man to create anything final, without injuring and compromising his own power thereby.

Up to now, it has been the highest and the most lasting civilizations that have resolutely accepted the drama as a means of developing and conquering themselves. And it is art, under all its forms, which has brought these civilizations down to us. There is no history for a people, as there is no personality for a man, unless he consents to inflict upon the stone, the sound, the word, or the bold adventurous action, the form of that lyric reality which he discovers in the universe. And the stone, the sound, the word, the bold adventurous action do not reveal their secret except to those who have had the innocence to break through the framework in which habit and law pretend to imprison men's souls, in order to precipitate their passion into new ways which will carry before them antagonistic passions, so that a new harmony may germi-

nate within the struggle itself, and rise alone above all the blood that has grown cold, and the dust that has fallen. Read this book before reading its preface. Here it is shown that bloodthirsty tragedy has determined our nobility. One must be either blind or a liar to refuse to see that. I make appeal to those alone who cast off with disgust the sentimental phraseology by which man, broken by suffering, begs for the peace of a new slavery, and who wish to discover with me, side by side, hand in hand, if the drama of the future has still need of blood in order to fertilize men's hearts.

I prefer to admit to them at the outset that I know nothing of what is coming. Nor do they. Nor does anyone. Nor can the future tell us, for that has still another future. I know only that the drama is necessary, either contained in the interior of man's being or cast violently into his action. I know that it is necessary to man, either because it maintains between his will and his power an active state of balance, which tends to break down whenever the menace and the danger disappear, or because it tends to destroy an equilibrium completely immobilized in quietude and boredom. But shall we be forever condemned for this reason to stain our hands with blood? Were there only in the world a hungry man and a poet, the inner drama would still persist. In the hungry man, or in the poet, the inner drama is permanent. For the one, his entrails groan, his child looks without saying anything at the fruit and the dolls of the

shop window, his wife is dirty and ill clad, and beautiful creatures walk by, scenting the air with heady perfumes. For the other, the fool sneers, the amateur judges, desire is extinguished in possession only to be born more implacably, the world is merely a flying symbol of that interior image which is impossible to fix permanently, the increase of solitude conditions all grandeur. But it so happens that all this interior drama does not appeal to the crowd. About the hungry man, about the poet, the crowd does not live, the crowd is not hungry. It is that crowd which periodically makes war in order to furnish to the small cluster of hungry men and of poets new unities of thought.

One has said often, too often, that as the drama of war tends to disappear from the individual life, so it will also be made to disappear from society on the whole. And the drama will only be made the more intense thereby. In fact, as the fingers of the individual loosen their hold upon the handle of his knife, his heart closes but the more tightly together. Passions that have become dumb devastate the depths. There is no mute tragedy more terrible than love, for example, and yet, before its power, murder has retreated, while love itself has grown in consequence more complex and secret and consequently more cruel. Will this prove true also for society as well as for the individual? I hope so, and wish so. But I shall wait until you create for me a form of social drama in which, without a drop of blood spilled, all of man-

kind shall display the violence of sorrow and creation which every single man feels when in the grip of love, with the immense perspectives of life which he discovers on every side, with the burning solidarity of all his senses and means of being extended toward a goal which he pursues in a giant exaltation, a drunkenness of pride and of daring and of responsibility, a power to twist into a single spark in which the divine joy is manifested, all the flames of hell. If you affirm to me that humanity has acquired in all its elements a maturity and a spiritual cohesion sufficient to make this drama possible to-day, I shall know by that that you understand nothing of love.

The present book may perhaps be classed as pessimistic. But that is, I see every day, a matter merely of definition. Man, in my opinion, is incapable of tasting life's highest joys, unless some inner knowledge has warned him that at the end of every road he may follow, destruction physical or moral, forgetfulness, neglect, disenchantment, and in the end death may await him. This is not, surely, social optimism. I am not concerned with the frantic rush toward new spiritual chains of those who, deprived of every living faculty of judgment or action, put into the hands of others besides themselves the need for action and for judgment, and who will follow the first passer-by if he can promise them a tranquil happiness bounded on four sides by the walls of the lower courtyard. That which strikes the observer the

most, in those dramatic epochs in which man has bled too much to be able to consent still to all the old deceits to which he attributes his wounds, are the conservative sentiments of revolutionary crowds. That which they wish to cast down, at bottom, are only the worn-out symbols of some imperishable illusion which fixes for the coming period their aspirations to repose. And it is only in order to renew these symbols that they cast themselves into torments. Their innocence is necessary. But one will permit me, doubtless, to seek in other roads the reasons for an optimism which the certainty of the uselessness of action and of dream can evidently not entertain. I believe that it is necessary simply to learn to play with the most frightful realities of this world, which are also the most permanent. From the time that we know them to be indispensable, from the time that we have gone one step further than they, from the time that we discover at our own expense that the feelings of clear-sighted horror which they awaken in our souls cause to flow back into it, like a revenge of the reason liberated from its chains, and of life set free from its limitations, the lyric indifference of great contemplation, one tastes an unspoiled and intoxicating delight. The abyss is covered with flowers. And as if one had wings to one's shoulders, one can now turn, fly over the surface of that abyss without rolling within. One has then truly conquered death. We have then incorporated death into ourselves, possessed it, made

it fecund. "The world will be complete for him who himself is complete." [1]

The first, and perhaps the only condition of this optimism, reconquered from clear-sightedness, is to consider morality itself as only the most empirical and gross means which the leaders of peoples have employed up to the present in order to maintain the slave in an attitude, which constitutes elsewhere, at certain moments of history, one of the most powerful pretexts for great spirits to free themselves. I know of nothing more fecund than to consider from the outside international, social, or political conflicts, and to attempt to disengage the powers that direct them, without taking account of the sentimental justifications which the almost complete unanimity of men tends to inflict upon them. It is necessary to convince oneself that only force is moral; I do not mean by force the power of muscular action, but the combined whole of needs and of faculties, the powers of creation, expansion, initiative, glorification, and conquest, of which the power of the muscles is above all a manifestation and can become a means—and that there is no morality for weakness except in the degree to which it accepts for harmonious ends the commands laid upon it by force, or in the degree in which it commences to fortify and organize itself in order to dispossess those who will themselves become weak in turn. It is necessary to convince ourselves that when we condemn or justify in the

[1] Walt Whitman.

name of moral notions the great biological convulsions to which have been given the names of wars and revolutions, one commits the same error as when we appreciate the value of a poem according to the degree of virtue in the subject.

One day, when I happened to express, timidly, before some highly intelligent people, the idea that it was quite possible that the war might be useful to the development of the human spirit, one of these, after making a protest, upon reflection judged that it might be the cause of progress in surgery. And since this man was entirely serious and incapable of speaking ironically, I understood on that day that the idea of progress, which conceals under sentimental ends the far greater reality of the vast dramatic movement of the creative life in which forms unknown to us are ceaselessly elaborated, was really the poison of the intelligence. I understood even that the greatest error of morality was to expect from war any moral progress. I understood that war, about which people argued in order to know whether it made men vile or more manly, made some more manly and others more vile, but that the true question lay elsewhere. Every time that a great event happens in history, we expect to see "men changed"—morally of course. But so long as men have stomachs, and sexual organs, which may be for a long time yet, they will not change. The drama has as its function to reveal, for a lifetime or for a century, to some men, sometimes to whole peoples, the depths

of the lyric universe, and the frightful heroism of their hopeless destiny. It creates the poet. That is all. And the whole of history does not unfold itself, according to my opinion, except as the work of a poet or as the life of a powerfully imaginative man, in successive crises of life, divided by more or less feverish states of repose, in which criticism and dissociation succeed to concentration and creative enthusiasm to prepare for another leap forward toward the reconquered illusion.

When one knows, and feels, and believes, this suffering does not matter. It is the fatal passage from one joy to another. To justify the cruelty of amorous courtship and the laceration of the maternal belly, it suffices that a child should be born. It suffices that a poem should leap from the heart of the artist in order to justify the moral tortures which his thirst for the absolute imposes upon him, and which it inflicts on those who are about him. It suffices that a lyric world should leap from the breast of a great people to justify the carnage of war or the fury of a revolution. Whoever consents to this is free. He who does not consent is a slave. Humanity will never, doubtless, cease to revolve in that tragic circle of which it cannot admit the necessity without failing in the eyes of the just man who imagines himself as leading it on, nor can humanity deny the same necessity without the risk of falling into habit and weariness. Every step in advance is provoked by poets, whose work suffices in order to

show the love of order, harmony and peace . . . and that which stirs up the poets is precisely disorder, massacre, chaos.

Let the human organism, then, overshadow the long movement of History! Let humanity know well that it does not conquer its true reality, except in the rare hours of its march in which, in a blinding flash of consciousness, it has the force to smile at its own terrible destiny. Nothing is serious. Everything is tragic. But therein resides all our grandeur.

I have often seen Charlie, the man of the silver screen. And I ask you to believe that I am not joking at all when I say that after Montaigne, Cervantes, and Dostoevsky, he is the man who has taught me the most. He is the man who has most boldly installed me in my actual opinions, where from day to day, I hope, my liberty may more fully affirm itself. Charlie Chaplin is the only poet of our time who looks upon life from a constantly and consciously heroic angle. There is more style in the most apparently insignificant of his gestures, than in all the combined works of all the Institutes of France, and of German "culture" for a hundred years, style having for its aim that of making all the contradictory powers which it is necessary for us to conciliate, enter into the same living form. And there is more drama in the judgment that Charlie expresses on life, than in all the military horrors and social miseries which reformers conjure up to incite us to revolt. He

makes almost all of us laugh because almost all of us do not expect the conclusions which he draws from his knowledge of the world. But to those who do expect his conclusions, this laugh becomes something sacred. Look at him, with his shoes, his little hat, and his cane, like the unchangeable element of the cothurnus and the mask in the antique theater. Observe his sudden twists at right angles, his hops on one foot, his leaning jubilations, his fancy steps in the battle, the silent joy and irony toward himself and everything else with which he underlines the most holy and most terrible of our acts—love, war, work, theft, play: the mute agreement which their metaphysical contemplation reveals between the sentimental sorrow of man and the indifferent laughter of God. Look at him juggling with his passions and our own as with soap bubbles and keen-pointed knives. The sense of civilization itself inhabits, sings, and is made ironic in him who inflicts upon life, in order not to be obliged to curse it, the accentuated and sustained form of the tragic sentiment he possesses of it.

For Emerson, there are three kinds of men, the abstract thinker, the materialist, and the skeptic, who act as the beam of the balance to put both in accord. I envisage a fourth, the lyrical artist, he who uplifts skepticism to the height of God Himself by magnifying, in laughter or song, in fresco or symphony, in temple or dance, all that is. He is the real liberator of the most noble of men, but

it appears to me more and more clearly that in order to liberate men it is necessary to the mechanism of society itself and of intelligence, that there should be slaves. Believe me, all is well, the passions and those whom passion kills, those whom the exercise of passions enlightens, and those who do not give in, and he who sneers every time an idea appears, and he who sacrifices himself that an idea may live, and he who, in order that his idea may live, sacrifices millions. Jesus would not have been Jesus without Judas and Caiaphas, nor two thousand years of war without Jesus, nor the hope of peace without two thousand years of war. The sea, the ships that sail upon it, the fires upon the banks, represent our destiny.

Heroes are lighthouses for the multitude, and toward them all souls push on in the night. But lighthouses are built to show us the channel which leads out to the high seas, as well as the port in which ships take refuge. The glow of great souls revolves around the horizon only to show men how to fly from the tempest, or to govern their ship in the tempest. But of what use are lighthouses if all the ships refuse to stir far away from them? Of what use are they if all the ships refuse to question their flame? He who sails directly toward them, his eyes fixed, finds shipwreck at the foot of the high promontory on which they stand. He who never looks upon them is like the carcass of a ship full of crabs and carrion, tossed by every breeze, carried away by every current, leaving a

little more of his ruin behind at every shoal. And if the tempest should appease itself forever, if there were no more reefs under the lighthouses, then all would together be extinguished, and humanity would be entirely recaptured by silence and by night.

The DANCE OVER FIRE AND WATER

Chapter One: Of Civilization

I

I ONCE knew a negro, a citizen of the United States, who, not having found in Paris an elevator in every house, bathrooms in every apartment, electric light on every floor, affirmed his black civilization to be superior to French civilization.

The practically unanimous consent of the white races seems to me to envisage civilization as being of the same color, if I may say so, as this negro saw it. It is not the least crime of the overstressed industrialism under which we have lived for two-thirds of a century, that we should do so—yet I do not say that we are right in condemning industrialism. I can still hear Carrière, who had more spirit, perhaps, than talent, replying to an idealistic and mature woman who in his presence was covering with anathema both our practical materialism and the base organs whose needs have demanded its creation: "Madame, upon leaving here you will be very grateful that God has given you legs to catch the omnibus."

Surely. Here, as elsewhere, it is necessary to maintain our equilibrium. Scientific progress is not civilization. It is not even essential progress. But it is, nevertheless, a progress. The railway is dirty, but if circumstances insist that a Parisian should be to-morrow in Rome, he will bless the railway. The telephone is annoying, but it is not useless for giving, or returning, some love rendezvous. And if electric light is more cruel to the eyes than either petroleum or oil, it prevents us from making our fingers dirty or from striking a whole boxful of matches when we have only a necktie to take from the bottom of a drawer. Ruskin will tell me, doubtless, that these tyrannical necessities are provoked precisely by the telephone, the electric light, or the railway. It is quite possible and in part true. Nevertheless, if the organ develops and frequently falsifies its function, it is also the function which creates the organ, and since I sustain other organs more inherent to my personality which the great majority of religions have in vain sought to conjure away, I accept these willingly as means to abridge time and to bring distance nearer.

I go even further. These means exercise, upon the whole of our deepest functions, sensibility, intelligence, and will power, a powerful action. They multiply to the infinite the number of relations possible between men, the number of relations between the intimate elements of the organism of each man. The sum total of the spirit, the sum total of the sensible universe, become thus more closely linked,

more complex, the sources of emotion, of effort, of drama, are opened in a hundred still unexplored corners of the brain and even of the heart. And when a man, or a group of men, is designed by circumstances or by chance to conceive and construct a new work of art, that work of art has every chance of becoming a more rich and more harmonious symphony, the number and perfection of the instruments being given. All the chances, I say. If they are not grasped, that is the fault of the man or the group of men in question. Is it necessary to say that despite its complex expression, or perhaps because of it, a picture or a statue of such-and-such an official artist of to-day is infinitely less complex and less symphonically conceived than a stone carving made by some slave in the depths of an Egyptian tomb, six thousand years ago? But, on the other hand, if a picture by Renoir is more complex and more symphonically conceived than this stone carving, if the emotion which it procures us is more unexpected, is it necessary to say that it is neither more profound nor more rare, and has nothing to do with this common notion of "progress" which is presented to the spirit of most men as a simultaneous increase in science and in morality?

Æsthetic progress, understood in the vulgar sense, that is to say as a continuous ascent in beauty, in nobility, and in power of that work of art, has then every chance of being nearly as chimerical as moral progress and for the same rea-

sons. Rousseau deceived himself, I think, when he said that morality has diminished since the first men. But it has not increased. The moral work of art, like the æsthetic work of art, has become, doubtless, more complex. But like it, it is made of immovable elements, which come together into play each time that it is necessary for a man, a people, to conceive or to realize some new equilibrium. There remains material, or scientific progress, of which I am just envisaging the function. This is the sole progress which is undeniable. But also it is the only one which can limit its ambition to being no more than a tool. A tool that one can employ to construct new spiritual monuments doubtless, but a tool, a material tool, and worth only what the men are worth who make use of it.

That was clearly shown fifteen or twenty years ago. What one took for a civilization was in this case only an instrument, or rather a method. A European people, endowed with the same equipment as all European peoples, was conquered by an Asiatic people who had only recently adopted this equipment. Why? Because, despite her late ascent to "civilization," Japan represented, in the sum total of her effort, a unity of conception and direction which the Russians never suspected. I know quite well what Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Moussorgsky signify. Yet despite the profundity of their action, it cannot pretend to have exercised upon Russian culture in general a determination so ancient, so broad, so sustained, as that of the

Japanese artists upon Japanese culture. It requires much more refinement and subtlety of spirit to design and enjoy a print than to drive an omnibus or to make use of one. When the Japanese people resolved to adopt a scientific instrument, it was easy for them to manage it. And their style triumphed over the Russian style because it was the superior instrument.

II

Style. It is this and this only which defines a civilization. Or rather, any particular civilization. When we look behind us into History, the route we have followed displays unequal summits and depressions. Every real civilization offers, from far off, a monumental aspect, something possessing duration, and perceived as occupying a certain space, of which all the elements, by means of peace and war, tragedy and idyll, dance and epic, despair and laughter, are taken up into the creative achievement, and there fused into a complete whole which we can take in at a glance. Except for the lyrical expression of its emotion, the poetic, plastic, or musical stylization of its sensibility, a people leaves nothing behind. The history of Egypt is like a geometrical theorem, stated in stone, subtly varied, undulating, profound as music, which fifty centuries have worked upon. Except for the system of relations which its tragedies, its dialogues, its temples, and its statues established within the limits

of intellectual consciousness, nothing would exist to define Greece for us. Rome would signify nothing, if its annals, its circuses, its baths, and its aqueducts had not fixed the sign of its administration and of its laws. We could have no idea of the ocean which ceaselessly moves through the Hindu soul, if we did not know its chiseled mountains and its moving poems. Nor could we know that faculty which France has always shown of passing a measured judgment upon the flood of lyrical or tragic emotions which all the other peoples pour into it, without its palaces and its churches, its moralists and its orators. Nor could we grasp the need to inscribe the eternal drama which inhabits it between the decisive lines of a passionate gesture, if we lacked the austere frescoes and the rectangular palaces which Italy has given to us. Nor, without its musicians, could we tell anything about that sensual power, victorious over its own pessimistic interpretation of the world, by which Germany can be recognized. It is the artist who creates and develops and finishes, undermines and dissolves, a civilization, because it is he who creates and develops and finishes, undermines and dissolves, the style which expresses it and sums it up in its most sensitive directions, its most decisive movements, according to its most clearly stated plans, its most vividly living profiles. It is a lyric and not a moral phenomenon, dynamic and not static. Not a discipline always arrested in view of a perfection defined in advance as attainable,

but a violent drama, chaotic in its elements which break and tear one another, arranged in that form which it takes when it comes from the hero or the heroic people who have the incredible power to express it for one moment. A luminous point of equilibrium between two pitch-black abysses of anarchy. A provisional order in the spirits and the societies which it passes through, definitive in the works it leaves behind, eternal because alive.



III

I do not believe that there exists, in the entire history of art, from the most distant depths of our old adventure to us who are alive to-day, and from the enchanted islands of the Pacific to the fertile plains of the Occident, a work which symbolizes with more majesty the spirit of civilization itself, than the pediment of the temple of Olympia, on which a great anonymous sculptor has told the myth of Apollo rising up amidst the conflict of the Lapithæ and the Centaurs to quiet them. Alone

he is calm, in the midst of hooves which beat upon the rock, of axes that crash through skulls, of knives that pierce breasts, of clamors of rage and death. Upright, gleaming amid these convulsed forms, these limbs that contract, these fists that are clenched, these nails and teeth that tear at the flesh, he has a serene forehead and a stretched-out arm. In the midst of the perpetual conflict between the mortal forces of instincts unloosed against one another, he is the spirit who recognizes them in himself in order to harmonize them in the poem without withdrawing them from the universe. It is the precise rôle of the artist. It is shown in the grace of Giotto arranging around his death-beds living sensibilities. It is in the energy which Michael Angelo possessed in order to realize, between intelligence uplifting itself, and matter tending to drag it down, that sense of balance which he pursued unceasingly, which matter and intelligence always broke down, but which he heroically re-established by an always victorious effort. It is in the ease of Raphael reassembling under a single arabesque, which separates their proper function, a world of anarchic forms. It is in the drunkenness of Shakespeare conciliating in lyric indifference the contradictory movements of the drama of passion. It is in the power of Rubens twisting in every sense, as clay in the flame, the universal forces released by the current of a river, by the flow of sap, the pulsations of blood and of will. It is in the supernatural

magic of Beethoven reuniting in the orchestral multitude the multiform voices of God.

In the general disorder, in the universal breaking-down of equilibrium, the need for order and equilibrium is more imperious than ever. It is natural that the artist should appear, above all, during or immediately after the most terrible epochs of history, because he is the man of order above all, the sole man of order who exists. His unique function is to establish order in himself, to recognize in other artists the need for an analogous order, and by insensible passages to combine his proper order with the order of other artists, so as to be able to create with them the style that defines their civilization. The highest civilization is the most artistic, the artist being the most civilized of all men, because he is, of all men, the one in whom the need to arrange and organize life is the most despotic and the most sustained. If we can imagine an epoch, or a country, in which every man is an artist—perhaps that state existed in ancient Egypt, and there were gleams of it, surely, in classical Greece, in France of the thirteenth century, and in Japan—we would obtain the most faithful picture of that which could and should be a civilization. In this sense, our nineteenth century is, undoubtedly, one of the least civilized epochs in history; rich in artists, it is poor in style, the artist remaining isolated. There is no architecture, and architecture has always been the most characteristic expression of civilized peoples.

It is possible that a day may come, when in order to destroy the image, at the same time rational and lyrical, under which we can only, in my opinion, represent civilization—it is possible that a day may come in which the scientific conception of this great collective phenomenon will triumph, and permit only method, mechanism, social automatism to have their say, and to constitute a society analogous to that of the bees, and freed alike from catastrophes of enthusiasm and intuition. At the same time individuality, and all that conditions it —imagination, nervousness, restlessness, the taste for adventure, love, and in consequence revolutions and wars—will disappear. And art at the same time, doubtless. Is this state to be hoped for? I do not know, as I am not living in the future.

That which I know, and feel, above all, is that such a civilization seems to me hardly thinkable. And I am afraid that it would become, by its cruel lucidity, its precision, its prevision, its mathematic determination, although lacking in war and in drama, a thousand times more atrocious than ours, seen under its most terrible aspects. Universal happiness would kill joy, kill hope, kill generosity. Everything being at the same level, none would aspire to rise. The intelligence, turning emptily in its diamond-hard circle, would rejoin unconsciousness, and everything that makes for the nobility of blood-stained man, seeking an interior good impossible to grasp, would dissolve into the

metaphysical perfection of nothingness. If it is necessary to choose between the absolute rationalism which would stabilize civilization, and the myth always living yet always renewed which civilization pursues in all possible forms, without ever fixing it in definite images, it is for the myth that I would choose.

IV

Is not this choice imposed upon us by the very nature of things? Is it not a myth, and one of the most daring, or rather the most seductive, this belief in a rational organization which, driven to its last consequences, would destroy even our own effort? Has not this myth already its martyrs, its legend? Does not so-called scientific civilization offer, as its basis, unprovable hypotheses, from which have arisen monuments whose conceptual foundations are as lacking in objective reality as the artistic myths of the beginnings of Egypt, of India, of Greece, creators of indestructible temples and of materialized gods? Is not mathematics itself entirely a myth, a symbolic way of speaking? And the most mythical, perhaps, because the most symbolic? The great cosmic constructions, the system of Copernicus, the system of Newton, the system of Lamarck, the system of Laplace, are these not all artistic intuitions, new languages which we cannot ignore, and which by this very fact acquire a secondary real-

ity? In what respect are they more verifiable, in what respect even are they more true than the myth of Genesis, for example, by which a whole people was nourished in order to elaborate in them notions on which we of to-day are still living? And the myths which we of to-day consider as having been entirely destroyed by science, the system of Ptolemy, for instance—did these prevent Greek civilization from attaining the most decisive and harmonious equilibrium?

The myth, which is the basis of every civilization, is the first work of collective art, summing up the primitive effort, a poetic transposition of the struggles of the human spirit against evil and disorder. I do not except, it goes without saying, either the myth of Copernicus, or the myth of Lamarck, or the myth of Laplace, destined to establish, in the apparent chaos of matter and of life, a continuity and a rhythm of which man has need in order to believe in the existence of the sensible world and to utilize it to his profit. I have already spoken of Genesis. There is, for instance, also the myth of Heracles, introducing by force an order in the midst of the brutality of instinct. There is the myth of Prometheus, stealing fire from Jupiter in order to enlighten man's brow with the intention of snatching from destiny the direction of the future. There is the myth of Jesus, ordering in the midst of the violence of contradictory passions the poetic life of the heart. A vast atmosphere of

myth accompanies our footsteps. The myth changes its form, its envelope, one may say, but the need for it persists invincibly in our souls. Ceaselessly it is created before us, and, in our own days, a great social myth is being organized in the innocence of multitudes, though we cannot as yet make more precise its lyric form, the kernel of the civilization of to-morrow. The myth is the necessary illusion which we imagine each time to be the supreme truth, and which is only each time a fleeting and temporary aspect of that supreme truth which we cannot grasp without condemning ourselves to death.

Hence each new myth necessitates the existence of a great need; a great collective sentiment which, conflicting with satisfied needs and individual sentiments, provokes terrible reactions and resistances. War and revolution have, up to now, constituted the bloody transition stage from one myth to another, from a form of worn-out civilization to a new form proposed by experience. We have been witnesses of the cruelty of scientific myths—"the survival of the fittest," for example. But pacific myths, such as that of Jesus, for instance, are not less murderous. More murderous perhaps because they impose upon the spirit the greatest sum total of illusion, the illusion to which we cling the longest, because it is the most consoling, and which we attempt to propagate, to impose, to defend with the most fanatic passion.

V

War and revolution, the drama transported from the field of desire into the field of conquest and reacting again upon the field of desire, are, in consequence, both one and another, an integral and active part of civilization. This is so true that war and revolution take on the forms of civilization, like the dance, the poem, architecture, or the song. War is nothing more than a stylization of violence, and war takes on, according to the people or the epoch that wages it, the style of that particular people or epoch. It is prepared, in its highest expression, by thinkers and artists, and when that highest expression appears, it is entirely in accordance with them. It is logical with Cæsar, Cartesian with Turenne, in turn rationalist and romantic with Napoleon. The history of Livy, the paved roads, the aqueducts, correspond to the former. To the second belong the architecture of Mansard, the gardens of Le Nôtre, the tragedies of Racine, the walls of Vauban. To the third, the criticism of Montesquieu and Voltaire, inflamed by the passion and sentiment of Rousseau and Diderot. A revolution, on the other hand, breaks out whenever a great stage-setting becomes worn out, whenever an ancient faith diminishes and a new faith seeks to rise. Between wars and revolutions there is sometimes opposition, sometimes the agreement which one finds according to place and epoch, between that which has style and that which has life.

Apart from the summits—that of Cæsar, for example, where the most bloody civil wars of Rome correspond to the most brilliant period of military conquest; that of Turenne, where, for the whole of Europe, religious and foreign wars, both incessant for a century, become intertwined profoundly; and that of Napoleon in which one of the greatest social convulsions of history is enlarged by the force of warlike expansion—apart from these summits in which the harmony is realized for an hour, and in a single spirit, between life and style, revolution is a war without style, warfare is a revolution without life. And their profound rôle is that one tends to incite life when style has no more life, and the other to recreate style when life has no more style. For this reason, revolution and war seem to me to be the most cruel factors certainly, but up to now the most necessary, also, of civilization.

Chapter Two: Tragedy, Mother of the Arts

I

I DO not wish to stray too far in the invasion which I am about to make in the midst of the fields of History, where art, everywhere, seems to flourish upon charnel-houses. As I have need to explore the soil under my feet, and to uncover old tracks upon it in order to test the degree of resistance of this soil, I shall avoid with care quicksands and marshes. These have covered over or wiped out the tracks that I pursue. From these depths bubbles rise, waters extend, flowers germinate, that trouble my senses. Too many forms, too many images, have passed here and there. Everything is mixed, everything is confused. And since the traces of blood and fire are visible upon all these worked stones that I have collected, I do not know if they are hardened by the fire and bound together with blood, or if the fire and the blood have appeared after a peaceable workman has put them where I have found them.

In ancient Mexico, for example, massacre never ceased. On the other hand, we have only vague notions as to the dates and circumstances of this massacre, and we do not know if the palaces and

the idols were before or after or during its continuance. In Assyria, the same state of affairs. We do not know whether the king-builder is always the same as the king-conqueror. But, after all, he affirms himself to be the same. In Egypt it is also the warlike sovereign who orders men to build, to paint, to carve. But what are the relations to war of the mason, the sculptor, the painter? Did war make them? Or was it born of them? We do not know. Under Rameses the Second and Third, who did not cease to extend or defend their frontiers by force, it seems that there took place, in the depths of the Egyptian multitude one of those mystic upheavals which force men on through every obstacle upon the way, in order to leave behind a witness of their suffering and their faith. But here, too, the date is uncertain, the effort of generations too confused and not sufficiently delineated. In India, the orgy of murder, the orgy of hunger, the religious orgy, the sexual orgy, which shook even the walls of those carved mountains in which waves seem to be washing to and fro, prevent us from recognizing the angles of the walls and the contours of the mountains. Asia has no beginning.

We understand the West better. We are Occidental. And the Occident for three thousand years has been ourselves. The Jewish adventure, the Greek adventure, the Roman adventure, participate as narrowly in our own actual adventure as the first experiences of our youth participate in the

adventure of each one of us. Despite ourselves, doubtless. The story of these races has been told so often that the myths which perpetuate them have entered more profoundly into our own proper determination than such of these experiences of which the remembrance is dead.

Now, what are the capital events of Occidental history? I see them rise in order, in a relief so powerful that everything which is not they themselves, or their preceding causes, or their consequences, can scarcely be envisaged in the dark shadow which they throw back upon history. They are, first, the conflict of Greece with Asia; second, the Roman expansion of which the conquest of Gaul is the essential episode; third, the advent of Christianity mingled with the barbarian invasion; fourth, the expansion of Islam; fifth, the forming of the mediæval communes; sixth, the Crusades; seventh, the Renaissance; eighth, the discovery and conquest of America, which followed the political union of Spain; ninth, the Reformation; tenth, the French Revolution. Everything else groups itself about these chief adventures, to prepare them, to finish them, to diffuse them, or to combat them.

Now, all these events have had as means either revolution or war, when it has not been, in the same time, or one following on another, war and revolution. All are social or political dramas. All are constituted by the passion of multitudes. Each is a tragedy. The happy peoples, it is said, have

no history. That means that history itself is tragedy. It is the recital of the efforts accomplished by man to conquer the life which overcomes him ceaselessly. That which the Greek poets called fatality is precisely this phenomenon. And it is also the enumeration of the monuments which man leaves behind to glorify his effort.

II

It is sometimes difficult to discover these monuments. When Rome conquered Gaul, the utilitarian character of art at Rome does not permit us to say, whether, after or before that event, if the art of Rome underwent a characteristic impulse from that fact. And the anonymity of the Gallo-Roman civilization does not tell us much about the circumstances of the moment when it made its most impressive appearance in the forms which it modeled in the image of its desire. It is useless to remark that before the Roman conquest art in Gaul was only formless stammerings. Because one could respond, what is certainly false, that the Gallo-Roman art is nothing but an article of import brought in by the legions in their war chariots. Besides, from Romulus to the Empire, the effort of Roman conquest never ceased.

One is obliged, nevertheless, to admit that the architecture and the literature of Rome attained their highest degree of force, or rather of abundance, at the moment when Gaul, being conquered,

and Asia Minor controlled, a sort of turning backward made itself felt in the Roman spirit, in order to permit the generation born of the great military effort to catalogue the moral conquests brought into being by the most fecund half-century of that effort. This half-century came between Sulla and Augustus, with Cæsar as summit. It was also the moment of the most violent and the most complex of the Civil Wars which had not ceased during that time to stain the Forum with blood. At the death of Sulla, Lucretius was twenty years old, Titus Livy died some years after Augustus, Horace and Virgil were born and grew to manhood during the course of that warlike epic of which Cicero was the witness. The Pantheon, the first circuses, the first theaters, the first arches of triumph, the most powerful of the first aqueducts, were constructed by architects born under Augustus or Cæsar. Vitruvius was of that period.

About another great event of Occidental history, uncertainty is even greater. In the course of the barbarian invasions, which came from beyond the frontiers and the Christian invasion, which came from within the soul, art disappeared. It disappeared for moral and material reasons. The Barbarians broke everything in cupidity or play, the Christians everything in ignorance or intolerance. The earth, massacred, did not mount up to the feet that trampled upon it in order to make hearts fertile and brains flowering. As the invasions rolled in one upon another, they had no

time to stop, to gather themselves together, to rebuild an altar within or without themselves. The social struggle, the philosophic struggle concealed or corroded everything. The excesses of the older civilization took on, for the founders of the new order, a character so formal, that a sort of mystic horror of the image launched their chief effort against the image, which, on the other hand, the barbarian controlled by them was not sufficiently sophisticated through long-enduring contact with Mediterranean civilization to attempt as yet to alter according to his desire. A confused world, dispersed in time, dispersed in space, which for seven or eight hundred years had neither the stability nor the cohesion sufficient to seek to define itself. A world which would define itself, however, slowly, like the chronic illness which constituted its history, heavily like its miseries accumulated in so great a number, and for so long a time, powerfully like a system finally emerging from so much force, ardor, crime, misery, and faith mingled. For three centuries, almost immovable, somber, inflexible, almost naked, the Roman basilica defined with a firm block the confused aspirations and the effort toward a new order of five centuries of asceticism and brutality. The generations seemed, in this long-extended drama, to endure each for three hundred years. The spiritual energy was as slow in being born and in increasing, as the warlike energy was slow in disengaging itself from its dismal and bloody chaos.

III

Apart from these two solemn moments of our history, apart, above all, from the second, in which Europe, changing front, reversing all its values in a swarm of sentiments, ideas, migrations, and massacres, could not express that which it thought and felt before having oriented its thought and studied out its sensation, each of the others has impressed upon the unclosing and the evolution of a characterized form of art an influence as decisive as the bloody outthrust of the mother upon the emergence of the child. Each form has been highly characterized, closed and cyclic, one might say, and after its appearance each intermediary form appears only as a transitory phenomenon, feeble and mechanical often, sometimes noble and solid, but never new and always marked by the predominance of stylistic preoccupations over the expression of life.

The fecundating influence of Marathon and Salamis upon the Greek art of the fifth century is too evident. It is always permissible to say that the fifth century might have been that which it was without Salamis and Marathon. However, the facts are these. And it would be very surprising if the events which resounded throughout the whole of Greek history and politics and art, up to the end of Greece, and in the imagination of all men up to ourselves, had not exercised any action upon those who participated in them, who saw them, or who

grew up under the influence of their direct consequences. It is true that Æschylus and Pindar were already born when the conflict broke out between Greece and Persia, and that Æschylus even fought at Marathon. That, however, is no argument against the influence exercised by Marathon upon Æschylus, above all if one notes that all his great tragedies date from after Marathon.[1] But Sophocles, Myron, Polycleitus, and the great anonymous sculptor of Olympia were children at Salamis, and it does not seem exaggerated to believe that upon imaginations so sensitive as theirs, so full of faith; and even—why not?—of credulity, in the midst of enthusiastic recitals, surrounded by mirages and myths, witnesses of the greatest events in the history of their country, these events determined an exceptional upheavel. But that which is at least equally interesting and perhaps even more, is the fact that Phidias and Ictinus, Herodotus and Democritus, Aristophanes and Euripides, all born between Marathon and Salamis, counted among the first children of the heroes of the two battles, and that Socrates, Thucydides, Hippocrates, born during the twenty years following, together with a multitude of writers, sculptors, architects, and painters, emerged equally from those who were fighting and from the trembling wives

[1] I shall avoid making the remark that without the Persian wars, Æschylus would not have written "The Persians" because "The Persians" was only a subject, and he could have found others. A nude of Delacroix is infinitely more tragic than all the collected battle-pieces of Horace Vernet.

who awaited them at home. The same remark applies to the Peloponnesian wars, where the hegemony of Greece, which since the Persian wars had belonged to the Athenians, was disputed for the second time. Between the last-born of the heroic generations and the first-born of the last great Greek generation, there is as it were a silence of the soul. But Plato, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Scopas, Parrhasius, Zeuxis, were born in the course even of the struggle between Athens and Sparta or during the years that followed the return of the combatants home.

IV

In fact, if I cannot doubt the immediate impulsion which a tragic event of which it is witness should necessarily exercise, upon the curiosity of an exceptional intelligence, I believe equally at least, perhaps even more, in the repercussions—should I say biological?—that tension, enthusiasm, exaltation and depression, suffering and joy of the young fighter and of the fair wife in tears who awaits him between two battles, should impress, at the same instant as it is conceived, upon the fruit of their love. And it is above all this indirect repercussion that a certain attentive study of history permits one to discover. Fools, and even considerable fools, speak of the inutility of wars, even when they have not been finished. That they should express their disgust is admitted. It is a moral reaction, surely useful, if it be only to

arouse the spirit of protest and of revolt. But thence to a philosophic condemnation, without appeal, is far. I have said elsewhere, and I repeat, do they know, a second before the birth of a child, if the child will be a boy or a girl? And while he is lying, his eyes closed, his face blue, his limbs drawn up, at the mouth of a gaping wound, in the midst of membranes and glairy matter, do they know whether he will be Shakespeare, or Eratosthenes, or nothing whatever? And if they wish that he should be so and so, should we also wish it with them? I know many excellent fathers who would prefer to see their son sub-chief of the bureau of finances, with a salary of five thousand two hundred francs, and with the perspective of the Legion of Honor at sixty, than to assist in him the development of a destiny analogous to that of Rembrandt, for instance, who died in a state akin to misery, or to that of Cervantes, who was mutilated at Lepanto, and who wrote in prison a book so well known since, that I find myself under no obligation to reveal its value to the shades of anyone's parents. It is equally curious that in history the story should be always the same, and that we wish to inflict upon the unfolding future the form of our most immediate interests, our most candid idealism, and our most infantile credulity. It is highly natural—the contrary would not be so—that the energy of man should increase by reason of the resistance it finds, and passes violently and directly into the substance of his sons. This

energy should be necessarily warlike? Not at all. But collective, in order that the phenomenon of spiritual birth should have more chances of being produced in an enormous mass of men, rather than in certain individuals, and with still more power, inasmuch as this mass of men is in upheaval, virgin of spirit, almost of soul, robust, coarse, or heavy of body. And up to now the collective effort, together with the necessary resistance which it should meet, is not produced except by war or by revolution. One cannot well conceive of a great common enterprise which could possibly meet, outside of wars and revolutions, resistances strong enough to provoke the state of drama in those who consent either passionately or passively to conduct it to its end.

V

The expansion of Islam constitutes the fourth historic example of a great collective drama. Here, too—and the fact is very remarkable because Islam is spiritually hostile to all formal expression—a military conquest sowed and raised mirages of art by thousands under the hoofs of its horsemen. The Arab, up to the time of Hegira, lived under his tent and built nothing. The peoples whom he forced into submission had built nothing for a long time. The Hegira was in 622. The first mosque, that of Amru, appeared twenty years later. The conquest of Africa was finished in 670. Thirty years later, the most beautiful

mosques of Islam arose from all the oases. The conquest of Spain came to end about 750; the mosque of Cordova was built in 785. Here again, it is true, war was chronic and art-productivity also. It is difficult here as well to delimit these two phenomena. One single fact remains: before its departure on conquest, Islam built nothing. When the conquest died of itself, or was hurled back by force, Islam ceased to build.

Its influence, for the rest, was not limited to the peoples whom it seduced or subjugated. Eight successive crusades confronted it with the new peoples of the West, enkindled and made miserable by seeking for symbols capable of increasing their faith in satisfying its needs. The Frank delivered the tomb of Christ, but pillaged Byzantium in passing. In return he came back with supernatural visions in his eyes, of carpets confusedly mixed in color like ripened fruit, or like a field of wheat flooded with red and blue flowers; multicolored faiences upon which the tails of peacocks revolved; palm trees swaying above aërial lakes suspended in the hot ascending air; violet, red, green, or purple seas glittering in the fires of the sun; cypresses and minarets upthrusting like cries into the burning silence. Reddened as with blood, black as iron, he returned to find his foggy town liberated from the mailed fist of the soldiery and the pastoral staff of the bishop, his wife in another's arms, his friends grouped into guilds, now the sole power confronting that of the king. The liberated imag-

ination of the burghers, who had pulled up the paving-stones of the streets in order to make barricades, increased and fecundated the magnified imagination of the returning Crusaders. A common sorrow and a common joy burst forth from the same source. Noyon became free in 1108, Laon in 1110, Sens in 1112, Amiens in 1113, Rheims in 1138, Beauvais in 1144. There were Crusades in 1095, in 1147, in 1189, in 1204, in 1217, in 1228, in 1249, in 1270. Noyon built its cathedral in 1140, Laon in 1191, Sens in 1124, Rheims in 1211, Amiens in 1220, Beauvais in 1247. A profound intercommunication united the hearts of those who had conquered liberty within the city walls, to the hearts of the conquerors of power through faith. Two great warlike and revolutionary centuries produced in France, notably, the most living and original art-form which has been seen since the Parthenon.

VI

Up to this point, and since the end of the ancient world, anonymity as in the days of ancient Egypt, has been the rule. Architecture has defined the effort of multitudes as, in the days of Pericles and Augustus, sculpture and literature have expressed the individual effort. Now, again, the individual is about to appear, and in conditions almost identical with those which signalized his appearance in

the times when Athens passed without transition from internal revolutions to foreign war, and from foreign war to battles between cities.

Beginning with 1215, during the whole of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, civil war at Florence reddened the paving-stones. The violent city was divided into two camps, that of the Ghibellines and that of the Guelfs. During the day, everyone wore, according to his party, a hat of a different color, in order not to kill except in good faith. Ambuscades were at the cross-roads and men were strangled in the churches. At night one heard rise up, sharply, cries of assassinated men. Now Cimabue was born in 1240, Dante in 1265, Giotto in 1266, Taddeo Gaddi in 1300, Petrach in 1304, Boccaccio in 1313, Orcagna in 1329. Afterward an eclipse set in, no great name appeared. But as soon as the war broke out again between the nobles and the burghers, and attained its apogee toward the middle of the fourteenth century to last till its end, then the spiritual energy is retempered by drama, and in thirty ardent years, Ghiberti, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Angelico, Andrea del Castagno, Paolo Ucello, Masaccio, L. B. Alberti, Filippo Lippi, all born between 1374 and 1406, define the implacable tendencies of Italian idealism. The third generation which transported the Florentine effort to Rome, to Milan, and toward France in order to realize it, appeared between the victory of An-

ghiari (1440) which affirmed the Florentine hegemony of Tuscany, and the execution of Savonarola, the conclusion of the last spasm of energy in the city. Botticelli was born in 1447, Ghirlandajo in 1449, Cronaca in 1454, Vinci in 1452, Machiavelli in 1468, Ariosto in 1474, Michael Angelo in 1475, Cellini in 1500. I shall guard myself from adding still other examples; one has only to collect the names.

At Venice, so long as business is prudent, so long as her territorial conquests do not increase the field of action and of expansion of the city, intelligence is silent. Men enrich themselves, and nothing more. The fifteenth century changed everything. During its first half the fleets of the Republic carried its soldiers to all the lands of the East, into Dalmatia, Cyprus, Morea, the Greek Islands. This is the time when the first painters, who witnessed as children the first departures of the ever-victorious expeditions or were born in the enthusiasm of the first return, the three Bellinis, the Vivarinis, Crivelli, Cima de Conegliano attempted, still timidly, to unfold the Venetian purple in the emerging glory of her chapels and palaces. It is the time when the most beautiful of the palaces mounted from the lagoon, deployed from their open windows to the breeze of the far distance their tapestries, laces, velvets, and braided silks, and began to be covered with paintings within and without. For a century still, the struggle went

on, but became intensified in order to maintain the tent of the Doges upon the Greek fortresses, and to beat back the Frank and the Turk. In this supreme tension, at the point of balance itself when the culmination of power and the first symptoms of decline appeared with the heaping up of wealth, the incessant coming and going of ships of war and commerce, the far-off sound of cannon, the crowding in of foreign merchants, the unloading upon the quays of all the treasures of the Orient—all at once, in a swarm, to celebrate the military triumph, the glory and the magnificence of the city, the adventures of the sea, the great masters appeared like a procession upon the waters. Carpaccio in 1460, Giorgione and Titian in 1477, Palma and Lorenzo Lotto in 1480, Pordenone in 1483, Sanmicheli in 1484, Sebastian del Piombo in 1485, Sansovino in 1486, Paris Bordone in 1500, Bassano in 1510, Tintoretto in 1512, Palladio in 1518, Veronese in 1528. Then Venice was conquered and thrown back into her marshes, and it was silence and death. . . . But since there arrived, after one hundred and fifty years, her final and sole military victory, her final and sole intellectual upheaval followed immediately; the victories of Morosini against the Turks, which began in 1684 and attained their apogee in 1698, were crowned in 1709 by the peace of Carlowitz. And Marcello was born in 1686, Tiepolo in 1696, Canaletto in 1697, Pietro Longhi in 1702, Goldoni in 1707, Pergolesi in 1710, Guardi in 1712.

VII

We have penetrated, by the Italians, into the heart of the modern world. The movements are decidedly more defined, more short, more brief, with a commencement, a close, and visible consequences. Spain discovered a world, conquered it, sent out for a century, for the first and last time, her fleets over the sea, held back the Reformation, forced Germany and Italy into submission, invaded and humiliated France, thrust back Islam in the East. All this lasted about a hundred years, because America, having been discovered (1492), it is in 1519 that the conquest commences, since Muhlberg is in 1547, Saint-Quentin in 1558, Lepanto in 1571, the Armada in 1588, and though in 1609 the Spaniard kept Flanders, he lost the Low Countries of the north and his decline began from that moment. Now, Goya apart, a meteor, a miracle,[1] all the lofty souls of Spain were born after 1500, all before 1609; Sainte Theresa is from 1513, Vittoria from 1540, Cervantes from 1547, Lope de Vega from 1562, Guilhem de Castro from 1567, Triso de Molina from 1571, Herrera from 1576, Quevedo from 1580, Ribera from 1588, Zurbaran from 1598, Velasquez from 1599, Calderon from 1606.

It is not difficult to see in this respect that the greatest number of great Spaniards appeared pre-

[1] Has anyone observed that the whole world has made this remark, and that no one is astonished at his own astonishment?

cisely in the course of the most violent years of the religious tragedy, in which unshakable Catholicism, represented by Spain, and the rebellious Reformation confronted each other under the pretext of a national uprising, with its most bloody excesses. The revolt of the Low Countries broke out in 1572; the independence is from 1609. And the intellectual energy which was thrown out from this, in Spain as in Holland, took on in Holland, even more than in Spain, an evident character so that it constitutes the most beautiful example, I think, of the action of the military drama upon the development of souls. Before the insurrection—and one knows what that was like—the fire, the wheel, the stake, the cross, the rope, drownings, executions, stranglings—Holland, properly speaking, had no painters. After the treaty of peace of Westphalia (1648), which put an end to the last phase of her efforts to conquer the disposal of her heart, she did not produce anything. The painters who were born, by thousands, during the war for liberty, form a gleaming mass between two obscure epochs. So obscure even that these men constitute in Europe an exception without precedent, without a to-morrow. Hobbema, the last painter in Holland, was born in 1638. But from the insurrection there is an incomparable list: Franz Hals, van Goyen, Rembrandt (who was born in 1607, in the outburst of joy and force of the victory), van der Helst, van Ostade, van de Velde, Fabritius, Jerburgh, Cuyp, Paul Potter, Jan

Steen, Ruysdael, Peter de Hoogh, Vemeer of Delft. . . . A hundred others, a thousand others, who express in a single stroke, altogether, with the richness, the savor, the verve, and the accent that is so well known, their great moving sky, their spongy soil, their marvelous country vari-tinted like an opal by the aërial mating of the vapor and the sun. I was about to forget that Spinoza was born in the Ghetto of Amsterdam in 1637. I was about to forget that the great Flemish generation appeared entirely in the course of the insurrection—Snyders in 1579, Crayer in 1584, Jordaens in 1593, van Dyck in 1599, Philippe de Champaigne in 1602, Branwer in 1605—and that the formidable Rubens was born in 1577, in the midst of the struggle, of a father and mother who had fled from Antwerp to escape the consequences of a too dangerous public life and a too foolish private one.

Certainly, it is more difficult to follow elsewhere, in the upbuilding of sensibilities and of souls, the trace of the religious wars. Since France is the cross-roads of Europe, since for twenty centuries she was ceaselessly crossed by war, I am inclined to believe that her long artistic history, which has lasted a thousand years without ceasing, from the Romanesque churches to the palaces of Gabriel, from the authors of the fabliaux to the romantic poets, and from the glassmakers of the thirteenth century to the great painters of to-day, has had for chief cause, along with the struggles of which I have already noted the first and shall mention

those succeeding, that situation which it is necessary, is it not? to qualify as privileged. In France, the Reformation did not bring any particular form of art, or at least it is difficult to make its influence precise, situated as it was between the Italian wars and the Thirty Years' War. In England, it is another story. When Henry VIII ordered the Reformation, he carried it out with a high hand, no doubt, but everyone was ready to accept it and the waters of the spirit were not troubled. But afterward the situation altered. Mary Tudor—Bloody Mary (1555)—restored Catholicism. There was war without mercy, violence, gibbetings, burnings, up to the day when her sister Elizabeth (1588-1603) used these violences, these gibbets and heaps of fagots, on behalf of the Reformation and against the masters of yesterday. So, from the middle to the end of the century civil war raged. Now, this atrocious epoch is precisely the golden age of literature, of the theater, of the most profound hearts among the English: Spenser was born in 1552, Bacon in 1561, Marlowe in 1563, Shakespeare in 1564, Ben Jonson in 1572, Harvey in 1578, Fletcher in 1579, Beaumont in 1585, Hobbes in 1588, Cromwell in 1599. Milton was born in 1608, and when the political Revolution of the seventeenth century carried the English spirit to its highest point of exaltation he was of the age of decisive orientations and stages—thirty-five years. All his doctrinal works, and, to close, *Paradise Lost,* are after the last and the most terrible of

English civil wars. The great books of Hobbes also. Isaac Newton saw the light in the same year that the Revolution broke out (1642).

In Germany the case is more diffused. There the soil is so parceled out, the spirit is so slow in organizing itself, so slow, as soon as it is organized, at dissolving, the link is so badly formed between cities and provinces, the unrolling of history is so confused, that one hardly can recognize what has happened at first sight. However, the opening of the fifteenth century helped toward a violent agitation of souls. John Huss was burned alive in 1415, and twenty years later men still killed one another in his name. Wolgemuth, Peter Vischer, Martin Schongauer appeared. But I do not wish to derive an argument from this. The Hussites were long ago, and for the rest Germanic art has neither the prophetic and supernatural character nor the great architectural calm conquering the surrounding drama which everywhere in Egypt, in Greece, in Italy, in England, in Spain, in Holland, in France, expresses intellectual energy leaping forth from moral energy tempered in warfare. At bottom, there is only the Germany of work-people, that which develops with slowness and patience, with a voluntary effort, unanimous and sustained. These people paint pictures as they carve a wooden chest or set up a reredos, as highly-attentive artisans. Dürer is only the prince of these marvelous craftsmen, and if, toward the middle of his life, a profound pessimism mingled

itself with his religious enthusiasm, it is precisely because a tragic gust passed and shook the trades and the forges of Nuremberg. The chorale of Luther soared like a vault above the murmur of uprisen peoples. Cranach heard it, took down his arquebus, girded himself with the long sword. Holbein isolated himself in his drunkenness and desperate tension. The war of the Anabaptists burst forth and devastated everything.

VIII

And this brings us into the center of the problem. There are certain wars which make fruitful, and others which destroy, the soul. Too violent, too prolonged above all, war cuts off effort at its roots, each time that the preceding effort, cut off also at its roots, tends to be reborn by contact with the soil. For a century and a half the most frightful wars did not cease in Germany. The Peasants' War having been ended with nameless massacrings, Charles V came, who struggled at the same time against France and the Reformation. Afterward it was necessary to hold back the Hungarian and the Turk on the frontiers of the Empire. All this warfare was confused, badly mixed, with contradictory whirlpools and backwashes, conducted without sense of national unity, under a mediæval régime, while the Occident was modernizing itself. Finally the Thirty Years' War broke out, at the end of which there was nothing

in ravaged, parceled, broken Germany, empty of blood, empty of tears, but deserted fields, dead cities, a stupor more dull, but also more sterile, than despair itself.

This is not the first time that such a phenomenon has been seen in History. I have remarked upon the barbarian invasions. I have spoken of ancient Mexico, where art certainly burst forth even from the slaughter-house, but where it owes perhaps to the bloody sadism in the midst of which it developed, its convulsive fragmentary character, its incomplete unfolding, as if crushed down by too heavy a weight. In France also, though it has been a country always prompt to find a compensating joy from the most somber adventures, the Hundred Years' War, which saw two generations leave the cities, live as wolves in the woods or in the caves, nourish themselves on carrion or on human flesh—this war succeeding to the most splendid outburst of lyrical power of an entire people, seemed to dry up the source forever. For two-thirds of a century the country kept silent. However, the recoil, which was delayed, came at the moment when all hope seemed lost. The third generation of the war, the mystic and popular generation of Joan of Arc, of the great Ferré, of the brothers Bureau, and the skin-flayers of Paris, the generation which drove the English out of France, saw very great artists born: Jean Fouquet, the illuminator of the story of poor people; François

Villon, the poet of death. And for a century to come, that is all; the effort, very violent and very short, not surpassing the need of keeping the country clear of enemies. In order that the spiritual flame should be reborn from the warlike effort, it was necessary, after fifty years of sorrowful drawing back and return to contact with the soil left fallow, that ruined France should seek in Italy gold and bread. She descended ten times, from the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. Now, Rabelais being ten years old at the time of the first adventure, Ligier Richier, François Clouet, Calvin, Pierre Lescot, Palissy, Goudimel, Jean Goujon, Philibert Delorme, Ronsard, Montaigne, appeared between 1500 and 1533. From that time on, the chain of great men is renewed. The Reformation tempered it. Warlike energy, tempered by intervals of peace, governed by well-managed wars, sufficiently brief, sufficiently distant, not to exhaust the nation, and by revolutionary upheavals not violent enough to weaken it, but sufficiently passionate to maintain it in health, extended the realm of French spirituality up to the time when another profound unheaval came to renew it.

IX

This time, the effort is so extended, the enthusiasm which it provoked so general and so brief, the

horror which accompanied it so poignant for all hearts, that the movement which followed seems to obey a single command, so much is it unanimous in its tendencies, broad, impetuous, coherent in its flight, united and compact in its sources and its boundaries. The revolutionary expansion commenced in 1796, when the Republican army, under the direction of Bonaparte, passed from the defensive to the apostleship of fire. It swelled and extended for ten years, oscillated three or four, then ceased in 1812, bled white and paralyzed by cold. Now, all the great French Romantics—Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Stendhal apart, which these fabulous years revealed to themselves—appeared in a flood between these extreme dates: Corot and Barye in 1796, Vigny in 1797, Delacroix, Michelet, Auguste Comte in 1798, Balzac in 1799, Dumas in 1800, Hugo in 1802, Berlioz in 1803, Daumier in 1808, Musset in 1810, Gautier in 1811. It is also between these two dates that Lamarck, inspired, created the most fruitful myth since Newton of universal history for two thousand years. And it is from the mature years of those men who appeared at the same time as the heroes of romanticism that the conquering generation was born which marched in their footsteps. Claude Bernard, Millet, Courbet, Baudelaire, Renan, Pasteur, Taine, Flaubert, Carpeaux, were the sons of those who returned to France drunken with butchery, glory, and weari-

ness after having displayed their passion for adventure from Milan to Cairo, from Cairo to Vienna, from Vienna to Berlin, from Berlin to Madrid, and from Madrid to Moscow.

If Goethe and Kant had not turned aside from their road, if Mendelssohn, Schumann, Wagner, had not come precisely at the hour in which Germany made manifest her rancor and her concealed force in order to overthrow Napoleon, one could believe that German thought and German music owed nothing either to revolution or to war. At least, one could say this about the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, because, between the Reformation and the fever which kindled the spirit which breathed from France, German music seemed to burst forth in the midst of a profound silence. The Thirty Years' War was finished for a third of a century when Bach and Handel appeared, when the torpor that followed had hardly begun to dissipate itself. It was necessary for there to be two centuries of horror, all hopes ruined, all sources exhausted, all the fruits of toil rotted, before these singers could appear. Without doubt, one should remember that Bach and Handel grew up on the ruins, that they were three years old when there arrived in Germany the echo of the dramas of the Palatinate, and that all their successors were born in the course of the interminable wars of succession of Spain, Austria, Poland, which shook up Germany for more than sixty

years. But to her one might say that these wars did not come except as a supreme stimulant, the last stroke of the whip in the midst of a material and moral misery so great that alone the great instrument of emotion, music, is capable of consoling it; music, everywhere, always, is the voice of despair, that which all men hear, that which arises from the shadows and from intimate solitudes in the moments of greatest desolation. It did not develop in Italy, with Palestrina, Stradella, Monteverde, later Corelli, Scarlatti, Marcello, Pergolese, but when Italy is enslaved, when architecture and sculpture are dead, when literature and painting are slowly dying. In Germany, music arises, soars, and falls in one hundred and fifty years almost alone, for the rest, in the silence of all, then accompanied in muted tones by the choir of the philosophers which increases more and more in order to harmonize with it, and to drive the people, through it, toward the conquest of fire. We have named the first two and the last three of the great masters; between them there is Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Schubert—Schopenhauer and Nietzsche charged themselves with the task of making the necessary commentary upon their outcry. And as this cry expressed the distress brought about by nearly two hundred years of massacres and robberies, it betrayed also the will and the hope to recreate and to impose the force which had been broken by them.

X

The moralist may now remark, after his first anger has passed away: "A just war can, sometimes, provoke salutary reactions. An unjust war, never." But war is always unjust for him who is conquered. War is always just for him who conquers. Except for the power of effort which victory makes sure, war can never be just. If that power is present it is never unjust. War is immoral in itself because men are killed in it. The aggressor, the attacked? All that is mere literature, pretexts doubtless necessary, because men do not argue except upon pretexts, always pretexts based upon miserable diplomatic or judicial combinations. Such pretexts are formed in order to throw back from one to the other a responsibility that almost all men are too conscientious—or too base—to assume frankly. Because the whole world, always, is responsible for warfare. But he is rare who consents to take this responsibility!

The fact is that, whether just or unjust, for the aggressor or the attacked, following the hazard of circumstances which permit to one or the other the maximum effort of resistance or the most unexpected occasion of tragedy, one or the other spiritually profits by war, or both. Between the Persians and the Greeks, it was the Greeks above all who profited, perhaps only because the whole nation took part in the struggle, and not mercena-

ries carried far from the centers of life and passion of their country. Among the Romans, it was not only the conqueror at Rome, but also the conquered in Gaul, who profited. Between Rome, Christianity, and the Barbarians, the retempering and remelting were complete, the spiritual ferment bestowed on all races, all souls, all passions at play, an element of its vigor. Under the uprising of Islam, it was the conquered peoples who seem to have found in the profound shaking up of their secular torpor the power to give a body to those mirages which the victor cherished. Under the mediæval Communes, it is the popular conqueror to whom the victor or the vanquished of the East transmitted, by means of the Crusades, profound lyrical elements which found in his exalted imagination power to lift up those poems of stone in which he poured out all its knowledge. The Renaissance knew neither of winners nor of losers, but only of continued alternations of domination and of submission of the two parties in the struggle, in the heart of which inflamed spirits went seeking their nourishment. The Reformation made the reformers fruitful in Holland and in England, galvanized Spain which fought it, cherished the flame in France, broke Germany for two centuries while awaiting a chance to renew it. The revolutionary expansion profited France above all, because it was France who played in it the widest, the most enthusiastic, and above all the most permanent part. But when anger seized

upon Germany, for her also, as we have seen, heroes were born and developed. All the great English romantics—Coleridge, Wordsworth, Constable, Turner, Walter Scott, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Carlyle, Macaulay, Tennyson, Dickens—were born or lived during the course of the formidable struggle which England kept up for twenty-five years against France. And one should not forget that Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were among the children of the men who burned Moscow in order to beat Napoleon.

Victory, defeat, civil war, foreign war, or the two together—what matter! For the rest, a foreign war is nothing but a vast civil war provoked by other pretexts, but setting at play the same passions. The important thing, precisely, is to set passions free. The drama is everything, the cause of the drama nothing. Everything is only appearance or detail, except for the fact that the drama is present. For that which man requires is drama, and not the triumph of the program of such and such a king or candidate.

XI

The drama in which a single man is engaged—love, for instance—produces in him a break in equilibrium so much more deep as it raises in him more problems of situation or of family. The drama in which many men participate produces in them breaks of equilibrium so much the more ex-

tended according to the number of men who are mixed up in it, and the passions and interests concerned are more interlinked and more complex. The lives of the children are menaced or divided; married couples, fathers, lovers, brothers die; forgetfulness, vengeance, adultery, are everywhere. Yesterday a hundred thousand men were rich. They beg their bread to-day. This man is to-day the master of that other who was his master yesterday. Yesterday a million women were faithful; to-day they climb the Calvary of sin. To all, every experience is offered, and is indeed imposed upon most of them. Sorrow grows greater, but also sensibility and surprise, and the power to analyze them. From this spring the differences of level in which souls and hearts, like a flood, precipitate themselves in an avalanche. The drama pierces the walls of the intelligence, of faith, leaps across the forces which are inclosed and permits them to work on each other in an increasing tumult. Men and women, and sometimes entire peoples, are thrown out of the habitual rhythm, the slumber-producing rhythm of life, out of habit, out of the current morality, out of the familiar law and its turning which makes them lethargic and vile little by little. New spectacles arise, absolutely unexpected, which provoke astonishment, then curiosity, then irritable weariness or revolt, sometimes enthusiasm, and which very often develop the spirit of adventure, very often develop the desire to return to one's native place, which

for the rest no one can find. It is filled with blood and ruin, that native place, and it has become necessary to build another. No hearth remains, no children, no wife, no parents. For the first time one fixes upon one's own interior life with poignant attention. Cunning, ruse, and force seek everywhere their road. Add to this, so that the conflict may extend itself a little, distant and strange voyages, a profound and tumultuous mixture of races, a renewal of blood, of ideas, of trade, the great currents of collective communion, hatred, and delirium. Throw into this neighborhood of storm, in which the power to grow or even to keep afloat becomes a banal virtue, some sensibility or intelligence already boldly awakened, some passion already powerfully planned, or even two young beings who desire each other and whom the drama now suddenly separates, now suddenly reunites for an hour, and who embrace in tears, their ecstasy multiplied by fright, by risk, by anger, or by faith, and who loose the germ of life in the unconsciousness of love and the knowledge of death. . . . And if you can learn why morality sinks in the course of revolution or of war, you will learn also why the spirit increases like a flame which embraces and enlightens all.

XII

Duhamel has written in *The Possession of the World:* "If certain pages of Beethoven were bet-

ter known to those who suffer and cut each other's throats, they would succeed in disarming many feelings; they would bring back to writhen faces a suave and ineffable smile." So be it! But is the tender poet sure that if, since the commencement of the world, none had suffered, none had cut another's throat, and the whole world had ineffably smiled, Beethoven would have still written those pages? Art is the spiritual transposition of love, which is already war, and which war exalts violently. The artist is the actual summing-up of the eternal tragedy.

The conflicts of interests and passions which form the subject matter of tragedies shown in the theater are only the scenic application of a spiritual reality—and why not metaphysical also?—infinitely more profound and more permanent than these. When a terrible conflict breaks out, that which of itself produces the tragedy is the impossibility of making a choice in which the really superior men find themselves. Among them, this one chooses paganism, that one Christianity; this one peace, that one war; this one such and such a just people, and that one such and such a strong race; but in the immense movements to and fro, which are so favorable to his growth, who could tell the greatness of a poet sufficiently heroic to know how to look on them from above in order to become the indifferent center and the invisible reason of their continuance?

The property of tragedy is not to put a hero

upon the scene, but to create heroes. And the poet is the first. And, whatever one may say, the hero is never he who marches at the head of crowds made fanatic by a transitory sentiment. The hero is the artist, is he who makes no choice. I mean he who does not make a sentimental choice. Who will penetrate up to the heart into the influence of tragedy upon the artist, when the artist is tragedy itself, because the artist is the man who wishes to conquer, aloof from parties, aloof from systems, aloof from the interests and contingencies of an hour, an unstable and dynamic equilibrium in the midst of the conflicts of sentiments which agitate and surround him, face to face with the terrible and clear vision which he has of final nothingness? The universal tragedy being the most powerful environment, either direct or indirect, to sustain and develop these conflicts to which love, luxury, wealth, ambition, and sorrow give an atrocious sharpness, it is that tragedy which, as blind creatress of life, is also creatress of art. The artist is he who by restoring them to their eternal significance gives value to the sensations and the ideas which are felt about him and which he feels himself at such significant moments.

It is in this sense, is it not, that the greatest of tragic poets in the modern world—since Michael Angelo spoke a language which almost no one understands—is perhaps truly that peaceful amateur who traced each evening some lines, his back to the great wood fire, his feet on his footstool,

in the depths of a forgotten plain, while outside the most terrible passions were agitating the most ruthless century among those who had proposed to the blindness of men a choice between two pathways. Montaigne alone, between the Pope and the Reformation, born in the moment in which was enkindled the conflict, increasing in the midst of savage struggles which it unchained everywhere, surrounded by men of war whose stories had awakened the curiosity of his childhood, and, in addition, placed at the culminating point of meeting between civilizations of the past unearthed by the Renaissance, the conquests of the future foreseen by scholars, and the social rhythm of the Middle Ages of which the acquired speed still went on —Montaigne alone since, alone even at our epoch, because we have only to read him to know that he is alone—had the power to become drunken with spiritual light and music in the midst of blind and deaf folk. And for this reason, as Heracleitus—probably—was the creator of ancient tragedy, he created modern tragedy, because from him emerged all armed he who was too great a poet to make a final choice between action and thought, he who was too noble a man to make a final choice between dream and reality, he who was too pure a conscience to make a final choice between the heart and reason. Shakespeare, Cervantes, Pascal, creators of new myths, sowers of moral doubt, of lyric enthusiasm, of love of life, and thirst for death. Sowers of war, in a word. Precisely like

Jesus Christ, who, in order to follow in Himself His ideal structures which He pursued with lifted forehead, with eyes closed like a musician, started twenty centuries of bloodshed, but also twenty centuries of art.

Chapter Three: On the Immorality of the Just Man

I

ALTHOUGH he is, among all men, the most immoral, I love the Just Man. Do I not love him precisely because he is the most immoral? He alone is able to follow directly his road without collecting the flowers of the banks by the sides. And, nevertheless, an unbelievable fantasy inhabits him, a subterranean fantasy which he does not suspect and which breaks forth in the consequences of his gestures, he being still alive and present either ten or thirty or a hundred years or twenty centuries after his death. In his wake he draws the crowds in whirlpools after him, jostling one after the other interests, ideas, and passions. In order to fight him or follow him, because he is a fighter and commands that men should follow, men kill one another, about him or after him. Mockery! No one fights only for the just man or against the just man; the just man fights against the just man, not being in agreement with him. Marcus Aurelius and Julian the Apostate are against Jesus Christ, Saint Paul against Saint Peter. Even better; when a Saint Francis dies, they fight over his coffin. In order to interpret

his doctrine? No. To obtain his body. . . . The pure being, because he is pure, is the stirrer-up of strife. The just man is the irony of God.

The first immorality is this: the just man brings war about, even and above all if he proposes peace. The second immorality is that the just man creates slavery, even and above all if he invokes liberty. The third immorality is that the just man unchains art, even and above all if he preaches morality. And whoever he is, or whence he may come, the just man, if he has the figure of a hero, upholds in the world of society, for the maintenance and the salvation of the destinies of this world, this triple immorality. Because the one does not go without the other, and slavery creates war, and war creates slavery, and it is from the interlinked play of slavery and warfare that art springs forth.

Man wishes to fly from the horror of life, that is all. And to live, for whoever begins to think, is horrible; while for him who persists in thinking, it is sublime. And it is in order to fly from the horror of living that other men, so soon as a just man has a heart sufficiently innocent to write upon a flag certain words which hide the horror of living with the false-face of the ideal—Peace, Justice, Liberty, Right—and so soon as he has an arm sufficiently strong to lift this flag high above them, throw themselves eagerly under its shadow. Slavery is the bread of crowds. They pass incessantly, without any other possible transition than revolution or war, from a moral slavery to mate-

rial slavery. A religion, a morality, a metaphysical system so powerful as to gather together a suffering multitude, that is a moral slavery. A consenting multitude, in the name of notions spread abroad in it by this religion, this morality, or this system, but already used up and drifting, held together only with difficulty by a group of initiates, that is a material slavery. Every word, every gesture which delivers them from the first, throws them by the same force into the other. The circle is closed on all sides. . . . When a material slavery is denounced by the just man in the name of a moral slavery which he proposes to adopt, the crowds will listen to the just man in order to break, with him, this material slavery. And the moral slavery which is the condition of their new obedience becomes the mystic atmosphere of a new social rhythm at the end of which, fatally, a material slavery is constituted. Brahmanism begets the pariah, who begets Sakya-Muni, who begets Buddhism, which begets again the pariah. Paganism begets the helot, who begets Socrates, who begets Rationalism, which begets the sophist, which begets Christianity. Jahveh begets the Servant and the Servitress, who beget Moses, who begets the Law, which begets the prophet, who begets Spiritualism, which begets Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ begets the sinner, who begets Saint Paul, who begets Obedience, which begets the Serf. The serf begets Arnaldo of Brescia, who begets freedom of conscience, which begets Luther,

who begets the Reformation, which begets the Puritan. The Puritan begets Hobbes, who begets Materialism, which begets Voltaire, who begets Liberalism, which begets the Salaried man. Useless to go further, because such is the rigidity of historic evolution: that which yesterday was called Eternal Life is called to-day Liberty. That which yesterday was called Liberty is called to-day Justice. That which yesterday was called Justice is called to-day Peace. And to realize Eternal Life, and Liberty, and Justice, and Peace —all of them Happiness under different or successive kinds—one must fight and fight again and kill and kill again, and die and die again. To escape from the old drama, man consents to submit himself to rejuvenated beliefs in which the new drama takes on life.

II

How do otherwise? It is slavery that delivers men. To possess a common faith, in this is power. In this is the sole means of conquering, on the ground of social realizations, disorder, or inertia. Every collective belief of a sentimental kind is a moral slavery because it is necessary in order to adopt it, to yield, into the hands of a man or an aristocracy, one's critical faculties, one's inquietude and curiosity in favor of the most vague aspiration toward an inaccessible happiness. It is given to man in order to deliver his power of action, which doubt puts into chains. As soon as he

loses it, he seeks, in the social chaos which results, for pretexts, words, new systems to nourish the eternal illusion. Material progress—the only progress which is not a myth—constitutes, doubtless, an idol which authorizes men to believe in the reality of his pretexts, words, systems, which he adopts one after the other in order not to suffer. He does not know that progress, in augmenting the mass of happiness, augments at the same time the mass of suffering, that the one and the other increase with the refinement of nerves, the culture of brains, the increase of responsibilities, the complexity and the subtlety of relations between peoples, the forward leap incessantly broken and renewed toward an Absolute that vanishes.

A new belief has a first effect, that is to provoke war, an old belief being nothing but a fortress of those who maintain crowds in a material slavery in order to use them at their profit. Always war. Before, during, after. He who comes to break men's chains, lacerates his own hands, bruises the flesh that burdens them, sees the cudgel of the slave-dealer raised against him. And when the enlightened slave can walk on his bleeding feet, use his unknotted hands, it is in order to kick the bodies of the just man's enemies and to strike them with whips or knives. And when these are or call themselves conquered, it is in order to put their feet in the print of the just man's feet, and hold toward him their two hands. A fine attitude for

slipping on of handcuffs or riveting gyves to the ankles.

Whenever a just man is a great poet, he does not deceive himself. He knows that he is bringing war. He knows that he is upsetting hearts, breaking up homes, dividing peoples and races, exasperating religions. "I do not come to bring peace, but a sword—my kingdom is not of this world. That which I dream cannot be realized. But you shall follow me all the same, and you shall abandon father and mother and wife and children and country. All this in order to obey me. Because I am a just man. Because I am the just man. Because I am an artist. Because I see before me a splendid form that you shall aid me in sketching out and which, when I am no more, you and your sons and sons' sons shall continue to pursue. Because I wish that all men after me should seek on all roads this form which shall never be found. Because I am Zoroaster. Because I am Moses. Because I am Gautama Buddha. Because I am Confucius. Because I am Jesus. Because I am Mohammed. Because I alone have the right and those alone have the power to realize a portion of the God that I perceive who have the innocence to believe, without looking elsewhere than in me, that it is I alone who have the right. Because I am a monster. A monster, you understand? A necessary monster. A divine monster. A hero. A conqueror. A holy destroyer. A destroyer of dying rhythms. A maker of living rhythms. Because

those who obey are the depositaries of force and I am the stronger."

The principles of justice and peace and liberty and right are, for the rest, more creative of slavery, of war, and of art as they are more combative and more simple. The most direct affirmation is the most sure mistress of the heart. "Do this. Do this, and you will not suffer." One does it, and one does not suffer, even if in order to do it it is necessary to tear out one's own entrails and bury the steel in the heart of a friend. The word alone delivers and creates. It is in the beginning. It is also in any fresh beginning. And this is what happens:

III

After Moses had spoken, there was thirst and hunger in the sands of Sinai, because beyond the mirages which trembled on the borders of the desert spread the Promised Land. To snatch that land from those who were born in it, who sucked in it their first milk and drank in it their last wine, there was the massacre of the Amorheans and Canaaneans in the name of Jahveh, the good and the just, and of the people He had chosen. To keep it, there were wars without mercy against the Philistines and Arameans. In the heart of Israel, in order that the Law should be kept, in order that the master of the moment should hear the voice of the wandering prophets who filled the roads with muttered curses, threw back their eyes, twisted

their arms, whirled about, howled, foamed at the mouth, covered their faces with ashes, there were incessant civil wars, assassinations by stoning, crucifixions, rape, incest, and Sodom and Gomorrah rearising from the face of the waters. An entire people was dragged far away, beyond deserts and rivers, their fists tied together, their feet enchained, beaten, grinding at the mill, peopling harems with their daughters and slave-prisons with their sons. Then came the Roman, who grew weary of listening to cries and complaints, who leveled the holy city after bathing it in blood. There followed a terrible ferment of revolt and anarchy, kept up in the whole world in the midst of social levels of the lowest misery, the deepest despicability, the ugliest hatred, after the dispersal of the chosen people among the other peoples of the earth. All this in the name of a Law dictated by a just man, a narrow discipline passing into the nerves and bones in order that a moral entity which wished this and not that after creating both this and that, should be strictly obeyed. But in revenge, there were poems profound and pure as the water of the desert wells, the greatest literature, the highest symbols of the world, that of the creation of Man, and the Knowledge of Good and Evil, that of the masculine power struggling with the terrors of love, and tragedy becoming not only the picturesque accident, but the rule, the law, the guiding power of the Spirit.

Because an enlightened prince traveled over the

plains and the jungles of India, guiding behind him hordes of mendicants, preaching universal love and infinite happiness, there was again a God, the most powerful, the most living for five centuries in the heart of the Hindu Pantheon, up to the time that Brahma absorbed him in his breast, between his millions of arms. There were monastic emigrations and military migrations dragging after them his all-powerful charity, flooding China and Cambodia and the Indian Archipelago, leading his teaching back to its source, mingling in the midst of a murderous orgy, its thirst for annihilation with the most brutal appetites of conquest which traversed in every sense the old mystical continent, loosing the hero Rama with his bow and sword against all the evil-doers of the world, in order to attain to repose. In revenge, the mountains of Asia were carven like a piece of ivory, dead matter was made drunken and fluctuating like a sea, the most frantic lyricism of the senses in all history covered half the earth, in flowers, in forests, in beasts, in sculptured faces, in innumerable symbols of adoration and love.

Hercules, Theseus, Prometheus, were these not symbolic incarnations of the just man of ancient days? Because Hercules, Theseus, Prometheus beat off wild beasts, chastised evil-doers, taught men to revolt against the powers on high, there were pitiless judges, Lycurgus, Draco, Solon, organizing for five centuries a social discipline which, raising up rival cities in antagonistic formulas,

threw them one upon the other in cruel battles, and fixed in blood, through all the popular assemblies of Greece, the unsettled forms of freedom. In revenge, there was the choral drama which lifted the noble countenance of man above the bloody conflicts of elementary instincts; there was, in architecture and sculpture, the appearance, the growth, the rhythmic development of the most mighty harmony that the intelligence of the world has ever imposed upon its material appearance.

Because a poet was born who disdained the things of this world in order to explore the heaven of the heart, because, after him, a hard mystic logician taught to poor people the true and only way of finding the keys of this heaven, while abandoning those of this earth to him who already held them, the marble gods were smashed to powder, their temples cast down, libraries were burned, the most melodious wisdom that ever found a habitation in men's brains was drowned in forgetfulness, drowned in night, and man became a beast harnessed to a cart, munching the grass, knowing no respite between foreign invasion and feudal violence, rushing on in hungry throngs to deliver a tomb. In revenge, three thousand naves leaped up to the sound of bells, the slanting sun traversed the painted windows to sow in the shadow of souls illuminated little by little, the love of oceans and fields and forests of autumn and moving heavens, and the portals and moldings and towers and steeples cradled in the golden light the beloved

images of all the trades of the city and of all the labors of the fields.

Because a nomad burned by the furnace heat of the sands promised, to all those who adored the pure spirit and consented to death, a paradise of palms and of fresh waters, there were a thousand years of swift raidings in the bloody dust, the steel of the lance, the iron of the scimitar penetrating trembling flesh, the ebb and flow of the highest mystical waves dispersing their red foam from Atlas to Caucausus, from Loire to Himalaya. In revenge, there were a thousand domes colored like fruits or the breasts of pigeons turning above the heated air that arose, ten thousand minarets reflected in the mirrors of cold pools, all the precious stones crushed and mingled together to decorate halls of justice, illuminate miniatures, flood with heavens and seas the vases and the carpets.

Because a German monk translated an old book to show that it did not say that which the other priests of his God pretended, behold in the breast of the same religion, and to combat or serve the interpretation of this book, behold, the axes are raised and the fagots are lit, soldiers everywhere with the same symbols on their fists, cut one another's throats, and Virtue, at the close of the account, fastened to her car piled up with gold, and with scythes upon its axles, the man with the black arms who passed his days under the earth to bring out coal, and his nights in the fire of the forges to work iron. In revenge, there are Hamlet and Don

Quixote, there is Pascal, there is Rembrandt, there are floods of music pouring from the heart of the hero.

IV

The fact is that a common belief, which creates war and slavery, liberates by the same stroke the necessary enthusiasm to confront life and demand from it its secret. Faith, inexorable and fighting faith, is the root-cause of art. And man does not pay too dear a price if at the bloody summit of the inner slavery which the just man has come to excite, the leaping out from hearts of the eternal illusion once more refound sows the borders of his road with temples, sculptured tombs, and altars. All that which lives and acts powerfully is saved by faith, because faith is the enthusiastic peace of the heart. After an ancient faith has died, the multitude seeks to group itself about a childish sentiment in order to make of it the nucleus of the love that it seeks. And when that nucleus is found the flame leaps from it, imposing its innumerable forms upon all that it has devoured. Yesterday, among the sad throng which thought itself free because it did not believe any more, and which judged itself sovereign because no one ordered it about any more, and which declared itself reasonable, because it did not love any more, the artist sought, in his horrible solitude, to discover again at bottom of his heart everything that reunited men, before it had appeared, the emotion before the sub-

ject which had hidden itself away from his agony, the obedience which announced and gathered together that emotion, the order which expressed and transmitted it. To-day, because emotion is provoked by belief, the subject which he who believes whatever the artist does, proposes to the artist, frees him because he has not used up all the means of understanding it in order to seek it. And because obedience is brought about by faith, his whole being is thrown upon the object of this emotion. And because order is imposed by faith, his intelligence transposes his emotion into its form without a struggle. All the slaveries of hesitation and search and doubt and negation and system to which he submitted himself yesterday are cast aside from his road, the moral servitude to which by instinct he consents to-day restores his liberty.

It is not necessary that the collective hope provoked by deception or by universal sorrow should take on, in order to result in a fruitful moral servitude, the character of a definite ritualized religion. All the several systems present or to come may fairly proclaim the fatality, so to speak mechanical, of whatever new order they propose. This new order has no chance to create itself unless it takes for leverage a need so widespread, so overwhelming, so necessary that an irresistible mysticism, formulated or unformulated, surrounds it like an intoxicating atmosphere that some seek and others attempt to fly from, but which all breathe in common. Here is, at the same time, for

the pessimist the dangerous shoal, and for the optimist the spring-board of liberty. A tragic contradiction which art—and art alone—is able to reconcile. For, since it is the only gesture of men which can reunite them and survive them, it is also the only one which one cannot look upon as other than a plaything. And as it arises always from the social level which in appearance is the most bent upon conquest and the practice of happiness, it expresses always in reality the philosophic state of soul nearest to despair.

Chapter Four: The Holy Spirit

I

AT the first glance, where there is no religion there is no profound and unanimous art, and if one takes account of the artists, they are all accursed. Powerful because alone, doubtless. But turning in their cages, and condemned never to be understood. I mean understood by the crowd, awaking in others multiplied echoes, and dragging them on after their footsteps, in the midst of songs and cries. The multitude has become subdivided. There is, as it were, an infinite scattering of its gifts, an absolute eclipse of its lyrical needs, and architecture has disappeared. Man is seeking man, and only certain men find one another, because they alone speak a language which others have forgotten: that which responds to a common faith, blind certainly, but because blind, intoxicated in every other sense. They are driven on by the power and the freedom of the image, because they are delivered from choosing. They are free to love, because they are emancipated from analysis. And they finally will build because all walls carry at their top, all domes at the keystone of the vault, all towers at their summit, a common heart which will beat for an hour in the breast of God.

So it is. The greatest atheist cannot affirm the contrary. Or else he is using deception. There are immense temples which arise from the sands of Egypt, to which avenues of silent colossi lead the way, of which the walls gleam with vermilion, cobalt, and emerald, and in which a forest of columns create night and freshness in the burning heat even of the day. All this to hide away, in the most somber of cells, the inaccessible image of a crocodile or a bird. There are those temples which build up cities upon cities, swelling them with composite monsters in which carnage and love quiver, as if the sap of plants, the water of rivers, the blood of wild beasts were running through the stone itself in order to twist and balance the hips, swell the loins, open the thighs, offer the breasts, and spread wide the arms. All this to cover a tiny phallus, lost in the center of the heap. They are those temples that cradle above the spaces of the west, high in the heavens, and as if borne upon the chin of some giant marine lizard, the grains of winter, the grasses of spring, the flowers of summer, the fruits of autumn and the gestures which we make to sow them and reap them, to wind them into crowns, in order to gather and eat them. All this finally to protect a box of ivory or gold in which rests a vertebra, a nail, or a lock of hair. There are twenty turning domes, and a hundred spindles of enamel that arise, and embroideries of tiles and silver intertwined the light filtering through peacocks' tails or caressing the throats of pigeons, all

the waters of the desert conducted here in order that the palms should be green, the cypresses black, and that the orange and the lemon should sow the darkness of their leaves with great stars of gold. All this in order that a mendicant who passes can prostrate himself in a niche which points toward a tomb.

Is this all? No. There are in Java and Cambodia mountains that forests and villages cover. Wherever one scrapes them, one finds everywhere the vaults, the steps, the pylons, the gateways of the same buried sanctuary. In China, there are plains that are handled like a picture, with their undulations which scatter light and shade and all the secret passages which go from light to shade; and these pictures for lines and for masses have a hundred giants of stone, thick and high as towers. All this because a man counseled other men to be respectful of their ancestors, and all the other because a sage dreamed something beside a road. Is this reason enough? Yes? Very well! I do not believe at all for this reason.

II

Let us understand each other. I do not believe that these feeble and puerile motives have sufficed to heap up the earth into mountains that the blind subterranean fire seems to have carved into images familiar to us all, nor to scoop it out into caverns in which all the forms fashioned by light are born,

live, and die in obscurity. He who believes strongly enough in a God to pass his entire life, and mortgage the life of his sons and his sons' sons in putting up altars to Him which, in addition, he waters with human blood, does not see the impasse which he enters when he affirms that this God is the veritable creator of the monuments which rise on every side to impose and perpetuate his reign. For the God who fights his God has, he himself, modeled his own statues, and they are equally pure, equally high, equally borne upon all hearts. Between the cathedral and the mosque, a ditch full of blood is dug, which ten centuries of battles waged by those who pray in the cathedral, upon those who prostrate themselves in the mosque, have striven incessantly to maintain at its level. The Buddhists would not have penetrated into the flank of the mountains if the Dravidian priests had not chosen by preference among them the human victims which the hag Kali, with intestines hanging upon her twenty arms, called for in her daily debauch. And I imagine that if the Aztec sacrificer had surprised a very humble poor man who was about to engrave upon a wall of basalt a panther with a hawk's head, he would have considered him as a special titbit for the god Huitzilopochtli.

There is, from one religion to another, an antagonism all the more bloody, irreducible, and fanatic, as it is needful to exalt the faith of each of those who practice it in fixing themselves upon the

invincible idea that their own alone is worthy of the unanimous empire of consciences and hearts. And precisely this faith is the lever with which man raises up the heaviest stone to serve as the pedestal to the most beautiful image of his god. That is the contradiction, is it not? But the artist draws us out of it. The believer never succeeds in possessing his religion. The artist possesses all religions. Art has accompanied, certainly, the greater part of the beliefs which pretend to create it. But it also precedes them. It survives them. It serves, at the same time, with an equally royal obedience, hostile beliefs which kill millions of men in order to show that their respective idols are the only ones which it is necessary to paint or to model. It surrounds them all from their birth to their death like an inexhaustible atmosphere in which they breathe life. Each one of them calls itself eternal, and yet each one dies. But the spirit which has reared up upon a promontory these pediments on which live gods who are offended at seeing these cupolas arise, empty of form, in the burning sand, the spirit which has built up over forests where the reptiles swarm in the marshes, these pyramids bristling with monstrous couplings defying, over the curve of the globe, flying buttresses in which are lodged virgins with children in their arms, is of an eternal youth. Because it is that spirit alone which each religion serves, while believing that it mattered most to give its own idol the form of a beautiful young man, because another religion has given to its god the

form of a woman with a jackal's head, or represented it under the appearance of a condemned man hanging to a cross, while still another saw its god under the image of a mendicant seated on a huge flower, his eyes closed and hands open. The spirit of Good? The spirit of a moral perfection to be attained and to maintain? No, because, in order to attempt to attain and maintain it, it sees itself constrained to kill. No, because certain religions, and those precisely which have given of their outburst the most harmonious and most moving interpretation, are at bottom immoral and have made evil divine. No, because certain other, which have made the Good divine, have reproved the cult of images. Not spirit of Good. Spirit of power to create innumerable forms in order to pursue therein its own image, to sketch it out tirelessly, and never —to its eternal salvation—define it completely.

Religion does not create art. It is art which creates religion, by incarnating into its images our desire to overcome life, to affirm ourselves, to spread ourselves, and impose upon our external universe the form even of our dreams, which torment us up to the moment in which we have formulated them. Art is identical with love, which is, in each of us, a need existing before the meeting with the man or woman with whom it becomes identified for a day, a month, or a year, and which survives this meeting to wander, unsatisfied and miserable, up to the hour that the meeting with another woman or man excites its resurrection. Religions are the crises of

love of human societies, and the forms which they leave after their passage are nothing else than the images of the object of that love. Incomparable images, but also transitory, alas! of the rapturous and despairing moment which we cannot keep.

"You look upon Bibles and religions as divine—and I say that they are divine. And I say that they have all come from you, can come again from you, and that it is not they who give life, but you who give life."[1] Precisely! And I know now, what the Holy Spirit means, that invisible force which descended from God into our hearts to give them the power to raise ourselves up to Him. I tell you truly, the Holy Spirit is art itself tending to realize itself, amalgamating in the humble instincts of common aspirations and inquietudes to form a religion which should favor its flight, amalgamating all religions, in higher consciences in order to favor the hope always deceived, yet never discouraged, of its conquest. God is, I do not doubt any more now. But He is blind and deaf. Man is the only one in the universe who in flashes sees and understands. The Holy Spirit does not descend from God to animate the heart of man; the Holy Spirit arises from man to animate the heart of God.

III

This explains everything, I tell you. There are frightful hours, and by far the most numerous

[1] Walt Whitman.

in life, during which the lover and the beloved wander at hazard, their loins burning, their hearts swollen with tears, calling all day and all night the beloved or the lover so strongly desired who also wanders and calls, frightfully alone. If they meet, the spark is kindled and the fire lightens up their skies.

This explains everything. If religion did create art, from the instant when she appears art also appears, and always equal to itself it accompanies religion on its road, and does not survive. Now, eternal and anterior to religion, and always there when religion dies, at the bedside or outside the house, it does not leap from the way religion takes, but after a shock of religion with forms found upon the road, like the embrace and the ecstasy and the child of the unsatisfied man and woman who have crossed each other's path by chance. If religion created art, how is it that Christianity, burning in the hearts of men, waited ten centuries before making forms fruitful, how is it that this fruitfulness has not lasted but three hundred years, how is it that Christianity has been prolonged by hundreds of years still, and has been purified even, without meeting again and making love fruitful? I see Christianity equally living in the souls of the martyrs of the circus and the fathers of the Church, in the spirit of the "beggars" of Holland and the English Puritans as in the heart of the cathedral-builders. But if the cathedral-builders existed it is because Christianity, by the merest accident, by a

concourse of circumstances which no one could have ordained—a fusion of ideas, migrations, wars, forms seen in the South, dreams brought back from the East, social needs, warlike spirit descending from the East or the North, and all this creating eddies within the commune, in the midst of the French plains—Christianity happened to find, upon the roads of its own belief, the form which it had loved in its dreams, and threw itself upon it in order to clasp and penetrate it. It was by the same token necessary in order that the radiant myths of the eastern Mediterranean, so living in the imagination of shepherds and fishermen, should suddenly crystallize the palpitations of life in the geometry of reason, that there should occur the unexpected encounter at the borders of an illumined gulf of men who came from the islands in their barques with glass and stuffs, and those who descended the mountains in their military chariots with lances and bows. It was necessary in order that Buddhism, so touching and loving in the familiar ecstasy of the mendicant monks who preached it from village to village, should flood with its mysterious light all the stones of a continent as great as a third part of the world, that Alexander should invade the Indies, that unknown conquerors should pass over the Himalayas, beating down the forests of Cambodia and the Archipelago, believing that there were oases beyond the yellow deserts of China and Turkestan. And the great dream of the Arabs would have been lost in the sands with the sound of galloping horse-

men, and mingled in the heated air with the fluttering of the burnooses, if it had not fallen by chance in Egypt, in Morocco, in Persia, in Sicily, into the heart of drowsy races who waited, in a slow fever, for that love of which spendthrift usage had almost emptied them.

Chances. Chances of the great road of life. Certain religions, like certain men, have scarcely ceased to love. Thanks to the abundance of forms —virgin forests and swamps, hot rains which make the soil smoke, beasts of prey ocellated in gold, insects, serpents, birds covered with gems, oceans of monstrous flowers, incessant tides of gems in the fermentations of birth and death—thanks to the abundance of the drama and of the ideas which military migrations and mystic tumults carried on and interwove in every sense, Brahmanism has the power, which seems imperishable, of imposing upon matter incessantly violated and penetrated the innumerable visages of its drunken dreams. And like certain men, certain religions have never found love, or else, after having known it for a time, have sought it desperately for centuries upon centuries, upsetting peoples with their furies and complaints of the eternally unsatisfied. This is the case of Judaism since its unique adventure, the poems of the Judges and the hymns of the Kings. Music is the revolt of the highest parts of the being against the voluntary sterility of triumphant Reform. The Christian Slaves, among all men the most thirsty for love since their coming into History—a thousand

years or more—have not as yet expressed profoundly, but still in a stammering fashion, through the Russian musicians, through Dostoevsky, their terrible passionate needs but for barely a century. Certain religions, that of early Persia, that of Rome, have not had the good fortune to make the decisive encounter which would have incarnated their desire. Other peoples—the Assyrians, apparently; the Greeks after Socrates, Euripides, and Praxiteles; the Japanese as soon as released from Buddhism; the Italians after the fifteenth century—have felt powerful crises of love without an imperious and common religion bringing to us the glory and the responsibility. And we touch here upon one of the most agonizing, but also one of the most instructive, phases of the permanent tragedy which constitutes our principal function.

IV

Art, when it abandons races, survives in the hero. As love in the imagination when the worn-out or appeased senses rest. And it accomplishes the miracle of making fruitful some spirits devoured by mystic passion, when often religion has not been able to accomplish this miracle but for a century or two or sometimes not for an hour in the course of a thousand years of general mysticism. The hero sustains the temple, when the jaded public sees no longer in the temple the image of its desire. The simple man believes love to be dead when the

woman who incarnated it is dead or abandons it. The people believe love to be lost when it has abandoned that appearance which has incarnated it for them.

By good fortune, that is not true. Love survives in certain solitary hearts, always identical with itself, rebellious, insatiable, feverish, indifferent to all that is not its prey, monstrous and immoral in its means chosen, on condition that they permit it to fulfill its holy mission of embracing and making fecund. And determined to maintain alone failing multitudes, in order to transmit to them when their need of love should be reborn from its ashes, the creative spirit. The choir being extinguished, the symphony has taken its place. The great artist gathers into himself all voices.

These were above all unbelievers; like those Platonists of Florence who, when the Gothic nave in France trembled and gave way along all its ribs, when the Italian palace, losing its terrible nudity, gathered up ornament and took on tormented form, when criticism upset Catholic dogma in all the lands of the West, still maintained in human passion, by an intellectual effort stretched like the strings of a harp, a power of conquest capable of galvanizing dying matter to make it express sentiments and ideas which Christianity had not even foreseen. It was an unbeliever, like that strange Leonardo, who, when the five preceding centuries had not turned toward the external world but to seek their own symbols to express their faith,

desired to seek the sources of an ever renewed faith in the most concrete things of the external world itself, examined without prejudice. It was an unbeliever like that pious Michael Angelo, despairing of being strong enough to dispossess God from the privilege of interpreting the signs which manifest Him to us. And there were other unbelievers like those decorators of Venice, who, in the last murmurs of the great unanimous choir sung by the Middle Ages, filled with frantic passion some sensual notes which it had scarcely touched upon, in order to concentrate into their instruments, less moving, but more powerful, numerous and sonorous, the diffused poem of universal life which the sculptors of France and the frescoists of Italy, believing only to serve Christ, the saints, and the Virgin, had sketched out for two hundred years. Were Villon, Rabelais, Ronsard, Shakespeare, Cervantes, still Christians when they tore from the powerful jails of dogma verbal lyricism, up to then condemned to unwind the problem of destiny upon theological subjects, alone? Or Rembrandt, who proved, by taking up his brush, that it sufficed to paint a wounded man carried by two men in order to dispossess, by the same stroke, religion from its pity? And Rubens, when he dragged into the movement of his force all the forms of earth, air, and water delivered from the Catholic hierarchy by some indifferent Hercules? And Watteau, when he followed into the woods the comedians and the world-

lings who wandered in search of an unknown source of music and delight? And Goya, when he disemboweled, with sneers of fury, the dolls stuffed with sawdust which figure to our eyes all the attributes of God? And the whole of German music, introducing the will of man into the center of the harmony and movement of chaos? Were they Christians, Balzac, Hugo, Michelet, Stendhal, Delacroix, Corot, Barye, Courbet, Renoir, all these born in one of the greatest of centuries to bear witness that the religious spirit survived its forms of faith? And was it Christianity that fecundated them when it passed across their spirit?

The greater part of the artists, for four or five centuries, have passed for atheists, and many do not conceal the fact. But I believe that atheism, and, what is more, skepticism, of an artist is a superior form of love, because it represents to them the certainty that love is anterior and a survivor of all the political, social, moral, religious, or other systems, which pretend now and then to impose their form on it in view of an end which is called now Peace, or Happiness, or Justice, or Good, or even the Beautiful. This skepticism appears to me, on the contrary, like an unformulated but invincible religion in which all the past, present, and future forms of art have found or shall find, successively, or together, an inexhaustible food. The artist is the kernel of the lyrical universe. It is precisely because the artist remains the most skep-

tical of us all in face of the letter which all religions claim, that he is also the guardian of the fire where the spirit rekindles the flame whenever crowds break the letter of the law forbidding them to love one another.

Chapter Five: The Morality of Art

I

MORALITY passes, in general, for the cement which binds together individuals and makes of their groupings the block of force which renders them invincible in defense and irresistible in conquest. I understand by "defense" and "conquest" not only a warlike action, but the so-called peaceful action of resistance or attack in the spiritual domain. Now, this is false.

I admit that the aggression of Louis XIV against Holland constituted an immoral act for which Louis XIV was punished, Holland having conquered. I admit that the aggression of Napoleon against Spain constituted an immoral act for which Napoleon was punished, Spain having conquered. I consent to rejoice in the victory of the Greeks against the attempt, perhaps immoral (?) of Xerxes. But there is another side. I have heard said that Cæsar did not represent morality when he conquered the Gauls. Nor Mummius, when he destroyed Corinth. Nor Sulla, when he enslaved Greece. Nor William the Conqueror, when he disembarked on the English coast. Who can pretend, however, that the conquest of the

Gauls by the Romans, the dramatic confrontation of Rome and Athens, the invasion of the Normans in England, have not brought about forms of new civilization, necessary, powerful, and by which we have profited?

Is morality more fecund in the conquests of peace? In spiritual conquests, in the leaping forth of the poem or of the monument from the heart? The Rome of the Republic, that of the rigid Senator, and the hard-hearted Conscript Father, that of the strong man who puts abstract law above the impulses of the soul, that of the sacred virgin and the infallible matron, established the Law, it is true, with which to nourish all the notaries, all the lawyers, all the ushers, all the advocates, all the judges, and all the congressmen that exist. The Rome of the Empire, the Rome of the freedman, the procurer, the rhetorician, and the Pretorian Guard, built up in the desert enormous cities, conducted the water of springs in arteries of granite, created circuses and baths, covered the boundary-stones of fields and funeral vaults with fruits, reeds, grapes, acorns, crowns of oak. Shall I speak of the morals of the century of the cathedrals, when every priest had his concubine, when the vagabond and the drab held the city after curfew, when the soldier never quitted his sword nor the executioner his rack? Does not one knew that on the pavements of Florence, Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Verocchio, Donatello, slipped into pools of blood from the murders of

the preceding night, that the monk Filippo Lippi seduced a nun, that the great Sodoma merited perhaps his surname, that Piero della Francesca, Signorelli, Leonardo, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Sforza, Malatesta, Machiavelli, Alexander, and Cæsar Borgia expressed solidly the same period, that the infamous Aretino called Titian his friend, that Andela del Castagno and Cellini were simple assassins? And does one prefer the England of the Puritans to the orgy of lust and murder in which Shakespeare made his appearance?

There, as elsewhere, force resides in a harmony conquered between the struggling elements of which morality wishes some to be suppressed in order that others may be preserved. A miserable calculation! Some elements condition others, and the Good, without the Evil, spreads itself out like a lake of cold vapor. But the Good leaps out like a fire if Evil is crouching in the shadows. The powerful man carries in himself an invulnerable force, and I tell you he knows it. Whatever may be his external acts, he goes with bare breast and each of his acts increases his liberty. The man who is beaten has need of overcoats and flannel underwear to protect and imprison him at the same time. Everything called "immoral" does not ruin a people or an individual, but only if the people weaken or the individual becomes enervated. When the spirit of conquest animates deeply both the people and the individual, everything called immoral is to them a food. They do not fear the

wind, or the dust, or the orgy, after battle. Nor to seize the treasure of the miser in order to scatter it under their feet. Nor to cast down the altar of the God who has never existed, or exists no more, or is not still theirs. The living man sows grain upon the ruins which he has made.

Morality appears when the power of men to seize upon the goods which await his pride and thirst, for love and danger, courage and activity, is diminishing. It offers men, then, a spiritual cure for their deformity, and perhaps they cannot do better than to accept it in order to give to pride, to the thirst for love and danger, to courage, to declining activity, the time to be reborn themselves under the onset of common life which puts them under the alternative of being stifled or of being strengthened. Morality is a discipline imposed by a dying aristocracy which hardens itself against death, and is one of the most ephemeral, happily for the interests of life, of our means of combat. It lasts for the time which passes between the worn-out appetites of an epoch, and the new appetites of a world which is coming into play. Aristophanes is really the defender of Greek morality against Socrates, and we consider Socrates as one of the founders of our morality. Morality is a reagent. It names passion vice in order that passion may revolt. It is the strait passage from one organism to another; it is the hardest enemy of every faith which dies, and of every faith that is about to be born; it places itself halfway between

the two in order to empty out the one and to crush the other in the egg. It attempts to make the failing religious spirit enter into the letter of the law, up to the time that the letter of the law, too narrowly observed, shall force all living men to tear it from its tables, in order that it shall be no more under their eyes when they question their own hearts.

II

Religion, so fecund in matters of art when it is an æsthetic system of the world, whenever a powerful mysticism reunites all the senses of men to universal life passionately invoked in order to justify its action, sterilizes art by the same stroke, and even to the bottom, when it is only morality. Socrates and Plato directed the first blow against ancient art. The stoics brought about the second, Saint Paul the last. The iconoclasm of the Councils assassinated Byzantine art. Botticelli brought his pictures to Savonarola in order that he should throw them into the fire. Protestantism stopped German painting, and German music is only the victorious return of German sentiment crushed by the hundred years of war which the Reformation had provoked. The Beggars of the Netherlands broke the holy images. Dutch painting is not the fruit of the Reformation, but of the revolutionary drama which the Reformation began. When the generation born of this drama had disappeared, and the Reformation triumphed, painting sud-

denly died. In England, the Puritans, by their edicts and their sermons, attempted to strangle all the sensual expressions of the spirit, which first hesitated and leaped back, then went on again when England did not want the Puritans. In France, four hundred years of Calvinism did not give birth to a single artist, except Jean Goujon and D'Aubigné, who are—for the rest—risen from the spiritual and warlike ferment of the century of Rabelais, of Bayard, of Ronsard, and of Calvin himself, not from a narrow discipline which has not had the time to work. The moral man will never be an artist, and the artist is he whom God has charged with recreating the world at all hours. It is the imagination of man that provokes his adventures, and love takes here the first place. It is the imagination of the social body which provokes its adventures—and war takes here the first place. And the imagination of the social body is the very heart of the poet. The poet is given to us to conduct us to the gates of the mystery which life offers to us without ceasing and which morality refuses. Morality reproves passion, curiosity, experience, the three bloody stages which mount toward creation. The moral man will never be an artist. Nor the moral race, either. Happily, there are scarcely any moral people—if any.

I do not believe that the bloody conflicts which divide men into groups can have any other underlying cause than this irreducible antinomy between morality which tends to stop life by placing itself

outside of life, and art which tends to place itself within life to borrow its power and increase in its movement. Living peoples, living races, living classes, living ideas, are necessarily directed, by the march of their destiny, to brutally sweep away tired peoples, defeated races, worn-out classes, fixed ideas, in order to substitute for a moral attitude of defense which pretends to conserve and restrain an artistic attitude of conquest which wishes to destroy, to reconstruct and expand. The drama is almost fatal, because morality seeks to establish in the individual and the social body an external continuity which paralyzes them, while art attempts to discover the invisible and profound continuity which breaks the artificial mold in which it pretends to close them in. In taking eternity unawares in every living second, the artist admits all the forms of art. In seeking for eternity outside the living second, the moral man does not admit but a single form of action.

If there should exist an æsthetic language, if the moral language, much more accessible to men—almost all, against the poet, partisans of the least effort—had not fashioned them, I should say gladly that morality represents, in the social domain, something like academicism in the plastic domain. A common moral law, a common plastic law, looks toward immobility and in consequence toward death. Art reproves imitation, because it dies of imitation. Morality preaches imitation, because it lives on imitation.

Morality is the instrument above all of the enslavement of men. The only man absolutely free, if this man can be conceived, would be the man of whom not a single gesture would betray imitation. Zoroaster, Gautama, Jesus, Æschylus, Masaccio, Montaigne, Sebastian Bach, Napoleon, Dostoevsky, are practically autonomous. I do not see many more. Because in Michael Angelo, or Shakespeare, or Cervantes, or Pascal, the kernel of the thought comes from Masaccio or Montaigne. In the measure in which a soul succeeds in effacing the traces of imitation from itself, it rises into liberty. And by this it makes slaves. This is the rôle of the hero. And this rôle is divine. He who imitates others the least is the most imitated. He enslaves crowds by his action. He delivers them from thinking. All the slaveries are made or unmade by the outcast or by the woman whose sentimental impulse is the only guide listened to. Through them arises imitation, for them it is codified. After the poet Jesus, who delivers life and unchains movement, there is the jurist Saint Paul, who arrests life and movement into formulas. The disciple always acts in the inverse sense of his master, by making stable that which is not beautiful except upon condition of being alive.

III

The world then does not build itself up on the plan of Zoroaster, or of Gautama, or of Jesus, or

on the plan of Æschylus or Masaccio, of Montaigne or Sebastian Bach, of Napoleon or Dostoevsky. About the passionate and dangerous play of a great soul, of a great intelligence or will, men form a circle, hooting first of all, then applauding, and letting themselves in the end be dragged away in the whirlpool even of this play if they lose conscience of their being, becoming confusedly intoxicated by the illusions poured into them by the keen-sighted player, whom they blindly defend and exalt by no matter what means. Almost always—and even always—by enthusiasms contrary to the enthusiasms of the player. The exaltation of charity provokes a murderous orgy. The example of action provokes a passive gesture. The spirit creative of new forms provokes their repetition.

The social work which morality calls for, with obstinate candor, is therefore condemned to an equilibrium as provisory as art itself, because it is constructed about certain values ordained by a hero up to the time that another hero arises to speak other values. One does not found a definitive society on the feelings of a just man any more than one founds a definitive æsthetic on the feelings of a poet. The one as the other is a center of force destined to be misunderstood, but also to create about it, by its attractive power, a formidable movement. And there is its fecundity and its superior morality, which morality misunderstands by pretending to give the force of law to the flash

of light which has traversed a great heart. Morality does not understand that a society, like a work of art, like a heart, should be a living mass of antagonistic elements, vices, virtues, ideas, passions, energies, weaknesses, enthusiasms, and disgusts of which the oppositions and the contrasts play and enter into each other by mysterious transitions. As soon as morality doubts this, she dies. Born of religion, which accepts these oppositions, these contrasts, and these transitions, she is ruined by criticism which shows them under their true light, and by this, in provoking a reflux of horror and despair, aims at recreating religion. That which would kill art, if art were perishable, is the cult of "Beauty." That which kills morality is its immorality.

Art, and art alone is moral, because it is the obedience to the rhythm and it cruelly makes use of everything, even war if necessary, to refind rhythm when men have lost it. Rhythm is that secret agreement which the beating of our veins, the sound of our feet, the periodic demands of our appetites, the regular alternations of sleep and waking, impose upon us with the cadence of our days, the immovable succession of seasons, the movement of descent and ascent of waters, the infallible return of the stars, across the changes in appearance which our modes of association, our interests of the hour, and our conquests over things inflict upon societies. The obedience to the rhythm

upraises lyric exaltation, which permits a man to attain the highest morality by flooding his heart with the giddy feeling that, suspended in the night and the confusion of an eternal genesis, he is alone in seeking the light and desiring liberty.

Chapter Six: Cleon on Parnassus

I

I DEMANDED one day from a critic of art his opinion on a painter. This critic replied, "One does not know on which side of the fence he stands."

Napoleon said that at the end of his century, one would not catalogue men except according to the political party to which they belonged. We have arrived at this point. To judge of the work of an artist, we interpose a screen between it and our eye. A red screen, a blue screen, a black screen. Electoral committees decide, between many works, those which it is fitting to choose. I do not see any objection, because these works are made for the elector and the elected. That writers, musicians, painters, should be annexed by parties, is normal. It is even traditional. The painter or the poet laureate are not of yesterday, and it is not for the first time that one sees such and such a party make use of the artist to display to crowds the objective and palpable proof of his virtues and his benefactions under the form of statues, triumphal arches, and mural decorations. It is his right, if he is the stronger. A statesman would say that it is his duty. This means of domination has given

at all times its proofs. The republican and lay eikon—I was about to say obligatory—under the form of a fat gentleman bound with a scarf who displays an urn with a majestic finger, the patriotic eikon under the form of a rifleman who leaps forward with his bayonet, or falls, a hand upon his heart, has replaced the monarchic eikon under the form of a naked athlete shadowed by a periwig and perched on a flatulent horse, or the religious eikon under the form of a consumptive or a Hercules on the Cross, or a woman on her knees.

I have no intention here to examine their value, which would be, for the rest, interesting. I bow before all, provisorily. But in our days a step further has been made, and decisively. It is not about writers, painters, or musicians that the parties dispute. They annex literature, painting, music. They seek for the voting-list upon the back cover of the book and in the corner to the lower right of the picture. The work of dead masters does not even escape them. Famous critics dig up illustrious corpses to brandish them by the feet. They are sincere, certainly, and dogmatic, and assured of having reason. They judge, they chastise, they cut to pieces, not in the name of the "beautiful," which is only subsidiary, but of the "good" of which there is no question, and the "true" which belongs to them. Cleon excites himself. He buzzes about. He strikes out sparks with his hoofs. He knows everything. He can do everything. He is king. And even

priest. And in turn or all together minister to all the ministerial departments. For he is ready for anything. And he does not astonish himself. It is he who won the war. And quite naturally. In the first place, because he is Cleon. And afterward because he is Right, Truth, and Justice. In the matter of the "Administration of the Fine Arts"—because the "Fine Arts" can be administered—he is "impartial," which is a moral virtue and not an artistic one, a fact which he is not alone in never doubting. It is well that it is so. He presides with equity in juries and distributes with good judgment the recompenses to those who have merited them. He protects those arts which form a part of the program of civic education which he offers to young children. So that those know in advance that which is useful or harmful to the party they embrace. The day is not distant when excited people will discuss, from looking on a still-life of Cézanne, as to what party Cézanne belonged. And they will find out, I hope. The doorkeeper of the Pantheon has need to know it.

One has seen recently that of two murderers of identical psychology, judged for an identical crime, provoked by identical motives, directed against two men of identical situation, one was condemned to death and the other acquitted.[1] This is the most widespread form of the most commonly accepted idealism. And I affirm that the whole of art,

[1] The reference here is to the assassination of Jaurès, and to the later attempt upon the life of Clémenceau. (Translator's note.)

from the beginnings of the profound life of the soul, has only been a silent and unconscious protest against such idealism. One of the marks of great art is that all the parties claim it, while none of them has the right to claim it. It is the ruling order above the blind impulses which drive on the commonalty of men toward sentimental absolutes.

II

The artist aims at a final order. He does not find it, because, having scarcely begun a work, he already conceives another. But he tends toward it tirelessly, and each new work is a new effort toward it. Now it is equally as absurd to think that a social or political order desired is final as it is to attach oneself to a social or political order about to die. The order is in us, and not elsewhere. And it does not reign elsewhere, only if we have the power to make it reign in us. Every entailment supposes a sentimental choice, which ruins the work if it is transported into the work by him who has made this choice. The artist chooses to express, not to convince. "The essential of the work of art," said Aristotle, "is neither its morals nor its manners, but the propriety of the fable, and the structure of the object."

Yes, I know. "In a time such as ours, one must take sides. Who does not take sides is a coward. Who is not with us is against us." So be it. But to take sides is not to make of one's

work an instrument of party. And I even wonder if the social and moral tendencies of the poet do not tend to have more power as they are less expressed in the poem. Held in by the poet, they seep through the stone. They animate his color with a secret vibration. The speaking of a dumb movement, despite the author himself, in the profound mystery of that which does not express itself, spirit, nobility, fire. And even more if the struggle is more dramatic in the conscience of the poet to render his vision of the universe independent of his sentimental aspirations in the social order. I feel this in the work of Æschylus, for example, and of Michael Angelo. An immeasurable tension, a victorious striving toward a drama deprived of every species of moral or didactic sense, an equilibrium conquered in the desperate effort upon the antagonistic tendencies of sentiment and reason which crucify the heart.

Evidently, the spirit of party appears among many artists. Aristophanes and Rabelais, Dante and Milton, Saint-Simon and Rousseau, Swift and Voltaire, Chateaubriand and Hugo, Goya and Daumier, Michelet and Carlyle, Nietzsche and Vallès. But take care. At bottom, these are polemic artists. Their work incarnates their hatred for real beings, beings flayed alive, which, if they name or no, it matters not, but which are living, or have lived. They make hatred objective. They make it the subject of the drama. They choose expressive traits to concentrate the drama, to accentuate

it, to characterize it, to circumscribe it. They destroy. Their fury burns. Their laughter bites. But from the time that the sentimental entity makes its appearance with them, the work falls, or hesitates, or drags, or swells. I think of Rousseau, of Michelet, so moving when the heart or the liver empties itself to love or detest, but to whom the claim of a collective and simple sentiment is fatal. I think of David, dense as brass if he expresses himself, hollow as a pot if he preaches. I think of Hugo, whose work, nine-tenths of it preaching and politics, seems a collection of sermons by a secretary of a singing-school, but who is the greatest of the artists of the world, when his anger speaks or he seizes upon the object. I think of Tolstoy, unique, perhaps, since there has been a literature, for his power to animate matter and gesture, but boring and puerile if the general idea happens to tempt him. I think also of the innumerable crowd of those who have only a general idea and who think art made—like the rest—to serve that idea. I think above all of the sovereign skepticism of those who wish, above the sentimental directions which the momentary needs of the surrounding crowd condemn them to obey as universal ends, to seize the whole of the drama in its complexity which does not look to any end. I have named Æschylus and Michael Angelo. But there are Shakespeare and Cervantes and Rubens and Rembrandt and Racine and Bach and Watteau and Goethe and Delacroix and Baude-

laire. And Pascal, despite himself. And Beethoven, despite ourselves. Because this apparent skepticism is with them only the gamut of an unformulated and monstrous faith in the indifference of God, whom all the believers in religion and ordinary morals are destined to maintain among us with the illusions necessary to His power.

III

The "ivory tower" has been badly understood, because those who define it have never suspected to what living depths the roots of art descend, and that they all plunge and interlace themselves in the soil enriched with blood in which the passions, the interests, the joys and pains of men, are heaped up day after day, century upon century, in clay, in flint, in water, in sand, in lava, in cinders, in successive stratifications. The artist who wishes to forbid the voices of the world to reach him shall not attain lasting affirmations, lasting because human, which the permanent realities of love, of sorrow, of friendship, of war, of admiration and death can only bring him. I see, rather, in the ivory tower those who counsel incessant political and social action, the elector, the elected who seek in the transitory realities of the most impatient and also the most monotonous appetites, the means of furnishing cheaply the said tower. An ivory tower in effect, by its smooth surface, without accent, hard and cold, and its insensibility. Do you not think

that Montaigne mingles differently with the mob than these optimists? That he is not the doubter? That his unformulated faith lasts, while all these faiths fixed in formulas fall down? And on condition that the poet does not believe in his noblest work, if he has consecrated it to serve a cause in place of serving universal life always revolutionary, and the constantly revolutionary order which it reveals to him, he can well belong to all the parties he wishes?

Should he be linked to the most retrograde party, in fact, the artist, turning toward life and disengaging order from life itself, is revolutionary in essence, or is not. His work, in itself, is revolutionary, because it does not strike and dominate except by upsetting habits which tend to install themselves, and interests which attempt to speak louder than faith. It is for a potential order which every new generation perceives against the already used-up order which preceding generations have laid down, and which prolongs itself among the greater part of those who emerge from it, by mechanical obedience to rhythms which it is too painful to break or to renew. As the artist is the first to perceive, in his realized works, those elements of crookedness which torment him up to the time that he has composed a work condemned to the same destiny, he is also the first to feel the ills of the social body which push him on to desire another. Above all in his youth, and before he has penetrated the identity of human motives under

the generosity of pretexts, and conquered by high struggle, through suffering and through meditation, sufficient inner liberty to dominate his surroundings. If it happens, then, that his political or social faith should accord with his faith in life, to await from the new order which mounts from the miseries and the desires of multitudes a favorable field for the development of his inner order, I do not see any objection. And this is the rule, or practically, in critical epochs where the social architecture collapses on all sides, and one can see a new scaffolding sketch out its powerful profiles in all the hopes and in all the interests. In times when disorder rules, the artist, because he is a man of order, approves the Revolution.

In social matters there are two sorts of illusions, one which I call static, because it believes possible and desirable, in hours of decisive overthrow, the maintenance or the return to the old political order. The other I call dynamic, because it believes in the virtue of the coming order which declares itself. That both are illusion, one cannot doubt, because they imagine that they combine stability and happiness, the one in a system used up by its own functioning, the other in a system not yet tried. However, the first is sterilized by age, and the second affirms, by its birth itself, its force of creation. Here is an immobile form, pure, in which, under the transparence of varnish, the most decisive lines which beget and rejoin each other design, in musical waves, an ar-

rested harmony which dull jewels and the fire of precious stones conceal to boot. Here is a nameless, colorless thing, without clear limits, a viscous and trembling heap, animated by weak pulses. Is there not more life in the most unformed embryo than in the mummy of a god?

IV

Against five centuries in the course of which the intelligence has accumulated in architecture and sculpture, in the ode and the tragedy, in philosophy and the epic, so many definite treasures that it does not seem possible that men can pass them by, one sees an obscure sentiment, born of the lowest depths of servitude and misfortune, carry away the unanimity of consciences, because that sentiment is life. Against five centuries, in the course of which love has made leap from assembled hearts such high poems of stone that he who could have predicted their fall might have seemed to announce its end to the world, one sees a trembling gleam, born in the most hidden retreats of meditation, carrying away the unanimity of souls, because that gleam is life. The slave of the catacombs was right, against Heracleitus, against Æschylus, against Phidias. The poor printer whom they threw into the flames was right, against the Law, the Cathedral, and Plain-Song. At least this is not the eternal order which we incessantly create in us to maintain our energy,

which is always right in attacking its previous forms worn out with giving life. And I believe this. The birth of man is a thing of splendid cruelty. He is torn to pieces between a grandiose past and a dramatic future. He does not accept life except by opening his mother's side.

Whatever may be the pretext of their formation, of their development, and of their acts, it is necessary still that there should be parties to keep up in mobs the instinct of warfare in all its possible forms, because this instinct is life itself, and affirms itself with more power as it attacks in place of defending, and affirms in place of denying. Art is only a state of collective or individual equilibrium following the hour, that the spirit, soaring over the whirlpool in which are plunged senses and souls, conquers upon unchained elements. In the harmonious balance of the work of a Phidias, for instance, the rôle of parties does not appear. However, it is only a system of forces which respond to one another, of volumes mounting to compensate for the descent of other volumes, of shadows which accumulate in its depths to permit the lights to burn upon its surface, of means of expression in which the struggle for passions inscribe themselves instinctively in the heart of man, the struggle of castes, of classes, of religions, and of ideas in the social body. The parties, their needs, their virtues, their vices, their victories, and their defeats, are only the extension of the acting and conquering collectivity of the needs, the virtues,

the vices, the victories, and the defeats of the instincts of hunger and love that tear the individual. If art remains, at the end of the account, when we turn back on our road to consider new history, the sole durable monument that we leave behind, it is because the artist alone, among men, has the power to make war objective and the marvelous and furtive accords which combine between these instincts, in order to precipitate the image into the future. Harmony is nothing else but an incessant creation of the soul in the heart of the apparent chaos where forms express forces at play. If this chaos ceased, life would stop at the same moment. The soul, fixed in an immovable formula, would clean go out. And with the permanent and confused idea of God, who is only an aspiration of man toward a final order of which the realization would suppress movement, space, and duration, man himself would disappear.

Chapter Seven: The Eye of the Master

I

MAN cannot die, unless the sun burns out, or the earth bursts by striking some dead star. He does not wish to die. And in order not to die, it is his spirit that he speaks to, and his heart, turn by turn. For man is only spirit and heart, and he would cease to be man if his spirit ceased to approve the sentiments of his heart, and his heart to animate the discoveries of his spirit. That is why, from millennium to millennium, man changes his spiritual rhythm, as a tired walker changes his pace on the road or transfers from one shoulder to another a burden too heavy.

When a man has lived too much, when analysis has disassociated the fibers of a sentiment which he has upheld for some years, love for example, or the Golden Fleece to capture, a poem to write, a monument to build up, an island, a world, a star to discover, all the depths of his nature will associate themselves to secrete some new ingenious sentiment which reunites his powers of drama and his powers of action dispersed by that analysis. When a people has lived too long, when analysis has disassociated all the fibers of an ideal which four or five centuries have upheld, a religion if you

like, a great political system, some common adventure, at the end of which the promised land is revealed beneath their feet, a new social mysticism organizes itself clumsily in the unanimity of their souls in order to associate the individuals dispersed by that analysis. However hideous the demagogue may be, demagogues are necessary. It is these who, by exploiting the incurable innocence of multitudes, create the social mysticism in which irresistibly the negative action of science, of criticism, of the decay of morals, finds an end, one day or the other, in the positive action of hope which pushes on the masses to rebuild the lost Paradise. The angel driving Adam and Eve from the Garden, that is the central symbol of the history of the spirit itself. Man, cast out of his own heart by knowledge, wanders within himself, and on the soil of experiences after experiences to return. Blaise Pascal has written the unique adventure of man, condemned to throw himself frantically here and there upon the two poles of his power to lose and regain himself.

This is the apogee of Greece, Empedocles, Heracleitus, Pythagoras, Æschylus, Pindar, Sophocles, the temple of Olympia, Phidias. Praxiteles was born of Phidias, Aristophanes and Euripides of Æschylus, Socrates and Plato of Heracleitus, experience of enthusiasm, science of experience, criticism of science, incredulity of criticism, liberty of democracy, anarchy of liberty. Every belief appeared, then, for all time impossible,

because all knew everything. And yet there is Jesus, there is Saint Paul, there is the Apocalypse, there is woman blowing up the fire which has burned up man, the slave moving the cinders in which the bones of the master rest, and anarchy recreating by reaction obedience, criticism dogma, dogma belief, belief enthusiasm, enthusiasm the cathedral, music, frescoes, the mystery play, the discovery of the earth and the discovery of the heavens. Again, everyone knows everything. The encyclopædists organize the world upon the plan of science and liberty. From science is born industry, from liberty socialism—the rigid closed ends of the machine and of faith. It is necessary. This is the systole and the diastole of the heart, which always beats somewhere in space, the formidable common heart of the dead, the living, and those not yet born. A new mysticism has always reason against an ancient rationalism, because it is number and faith against an experience used, triturated, dissected, disassociated up to death. A new rationalism has always reason against an old mysticism, because it is intelligence and curiosity against a broken-down belief, despoiled of its mystery, and ossified forever. Intelligence tests the materials of mysticism and, in the fashion of a chemical reaction, dissolves them, disperses them, and finally reassembles them to make a new body. Mysticism gathers together the materials of intelligence, which, once constituted and its analysis accomplished, finds everywhere the

bounds of mystery and of combat, or accepts them, according to the individuals. Poets and unhappy people aspire to a new mystery, these to find happiness, and those inspiration. Happy people and clergy fight a new mystery in order to preserve the privileges of fortune or of knowledge. All will serve it by enthusiasm or need, by egoism or stupidity. It is as irresistible as love. And to save the wandering spirit, it condemns it to obey.

II

I can do nothing. Nor any one of you. Nor God. Because it is you, and it is I, and it is God who obey together this law. We all tend to a second of harmony, a flash between two somber plains, where everything in us is put into accord, the senses, the heart, the intelligence, manly will, and human weakness, to impose upon the work and in the action the trace of a provisory, but absolute order, seized by the drunken spirit in the universal anarchy. Now it is the multitude who attain to a great love, and then, in Egypt, in India, in China, in archaic Greece, over the passage of the Arabs, in France of the thirteenth century, the temple arises from earth with an immense rumor. Now, when the social organism is in fragments, when criticism has taken up everything in order to destroy and refound everything, a hero appears —as I have already said, it seems—who will sustain the temple on his shoulder and gather up in

the silence of his generous and despairing heart the love which has abandoned the multitudes. Yesterday the crowd was a hero. To-day the hero is a crowd. This is the history of Michael Angelo, the history of Shakespeare, the history of Rubens, the history of Beethoven. It is, more or less, the story of those who create, that they people their solitude, that they people also the solitude of those who wander in and out of their hearts and lives, in the useless search for creative strength.

This superior equilibrium, which is the sign and reason of its own passage, and which it tears by continuous effort from the bloody depths of its own being in order to pour it out on the crowd in waves of harmony, this the hero obtains by an indefatigable pursuit of the balance in his work between the lyric and the rational element. The dumb rhythm of wisdom is as present in the pantheistic disorder of "The Tempest" as a sovereign orchestral order in the most pathetic instants of the Fifth Symphony. The formidable movement which twists the trees of "The Hunt" [1] with the sap issued from the earth and the light scattered from the sky, obeys the sustained arabesque of the intelligence as visibly as the drama of the Sistine the terrible cadences of the will. In science, in action even, held like a cord between two extremities of a bow, this royal faculty of making the geometric and the poetic tendencies of the soul agree in an absolute form in which the flame and the blood fuse

[1] By Rubens. (Translator's note.)

together, characterize the hero. Newton would never have found by calculation the mechanical movement of the heavens, if the silent and distant movement of the spheres had not intercrossed its waves with the lyrical divination of his heart. Lamarck would never have imagined the poem of transformism if for sixty years he had not pursued in its most humble forms, with the most clear-sighted attention, the secrets exchanged by life. Jesus would not have dreamed the mystic epic of man, if He had not descended into the most somber retreats of the motives which make man work. Christopher Columbus would never have discovered America if the march of the currents, the ocean of the stars, the alternation of days and nights, had not affirmed the sphericity of the earth and the simple and grandiose rightness of his spirit. Napoleon would not have bound together so surely the strategic lines of his armies and the fanaticism of hearts if he had not believed in his mission of unifying peoples and races into the harmony of the law.

III

So, the social equilibrium seems to have attained its most decisive moments when there are put into accord, in the common organism, the aristocratic element which commands after having bathed its authority in war, and the popular element which obeys after having sanctified its faith in revolt. It seems that no great epoch can pass over these

two struggling forces, of which the victories and alternative defeats change the successive appearances of the social edifice, but which, more or less affirmed and divided, or dissimulated and badly defined, are always present and dip their common harmony into a more rich and vast common accumulation of sufferings, of ideas, of adventures and passions. On all the summits one finds them. In Egypt, surely, because while the theocratic caste ordered the disposition and orientalism of the temple, it was the fellah who decorated it and introduced into the inflexible formula of the theologian, forbidding the curiosity of the artist to overstep the bounds of the mystery, the innumerable vibrations of his simple life as fisherman, as mower, as farm hand, to the degree that he succeeded in making all the appearances of form quiver between the motionless frames of an imposed hieraticism. In Greece also, where democracy imposed the harmonious balance of universal relativity upon the rigorous calculation of the architecture of the temple, an aristocratic image of a city which fatality dominated and of which the effort reposed upon the slave and the warrior. In Rome, where the decoration of the boundary stone of the fields and the rustic altar, the rude comedy of Plautus, the sap of Lucretius and the bile of Juvenal, covered with popular froth the violent nakedness of the circus, of the aqueduct, of the paved road, of the annals in which the father and the chieftain inscribed the form of their will.

In Romanesque France, where, when the baron stretched out his mailed fist over the cloister and the abbey, the priest gathered up piously into the tomb of the soul the single gleam of faith to spread above it the cradle of stone upheld by the thick wall of which the ecclesiastic armature was the spiritual cement. In the France of the Communes, where the jealous corporation, closed in, radical, everywhere upheld by the counterthrust of the flying buttress and the crossing of the pointed arches, the popular rush toward a liberty of expression in bas-reliefs, statues, glass, garlands of fruits and leaves, and embroideries, poetry of the fields, the street, the market place. In classical France, where the harmony of Racine, the savor of La Fontaine, the verve of Molière, and the agony of Pascal animated the rigidity of the Cartesian construction, the majesty of the monarchic dogma, and the arrangement of gardens. The supreme point of civilization that it is possible to attain is situated at the spot and at the epoch where the social architecture, which is of the aristocratic order, has the most clear and hard sense of its material interests and of the sacrifices which it must make to assure the triumph of these, and where popular mysticism, which envelops it like a fruit about a kernel, is nourished by the most lyric illusion. Let aristocracy be the best armed for war, the people the most prepared to make it in the name of happiness, and the most sure equilibrium of the

soul will spread itself into the poem to impress upon the highest style its most radiant splendor.

The safety of the soul, across revolutions and wars, across apparent catastrophes which upset the material monuments of civilization to make germinate in the drama new immaterial monuments which stretch themselves out and design themselves in the desires of multitudes before being born under their fingers, is that there are only very few examples where an aristocracy has survived those forms of sentiment which demand its death to live. In reality, the real aristocratic oppression does not commence except when the level of life sinks in the popular element, and is only the most sure means of provoking, if the popular element is worthy, the revolt which purifies. But it is in the heart of the revolt itself, in the entrails of the crowd, there where fury and hunger harden the muscles the most and sharpen the teeth the best, that the new aristocracy rises and organizes itself dumbly. It is in the ranks of the soldiers that the war chief appears. Military feudalism, clergy, caste, corporation, the skeleton constitutes itself with that which is hardest and strongest in the organism, with that which groups itself most strictly about the most concrete material interests to defend, and the most cutting arms of battle to conquer. The slave feeds himself on phrases, but he, among the slaves, who is made to become chieftain, feeds himself on meat and iron. In every wave of life that mounts up from the depths of

necessity, the bleeding flesh is in a dream, but the backbone is self-interest. The association forms itself from below to the top, and from the center to the circumference in the depth of mystic waves, and the great moment appears at the fugitive second where the organism has all it needs of salt in its bones and of blood in its arteries to show to itself its perfect living unity by its proper power of action. It is for this reason, I imagine, that when a period of social and moral anarchy touches its culminating point, the revolutionaries are the only ones not to be anarchists, because they constitute the embryo skeleton of the future organism.

IV

There is necessary then, at close of the account, and after being deprived of that sly humility which is the least noble form of pride, to accept with resolution every new moral slavery which bears within itself lyric life, because it offers us with it the liberation of our enthusiasm and the means of organizing and disciplining our gifts. When order is organic, and not imposed, internal and not external, living and not arrested in formulas, the supreme moment appears. Beyond the social discipline obeyed in the forward leap of the soul, there is no liberty for man as there is no liberty for the artist outside of the intellectual discipline conquered by the same leap forward. All the builders obey this fact. Because they were

told that our spiritual phantom accompanied our corpse, I know those who have passed joyously their whole lives in the gloom in order to carve and color, on the walls of a tomb, the pure silhouettes of the ibis, ducks quacking, geese tied together, young girls as fresh and clear as the water they carried in a pot, or as the flower bound in its sheath which they carried in their hands. Because one said to them that the communion with the innumerable forms of the world conducts us to rest without end, I know those who have emerged without regret from the western side of a mountain of which their ancestor, a century before, had pierced with enthusiasm the eastern side, in order to work it after him entirely in moving figures of monsters, of lovers, and of warriors. Because one said to them that our blood poured out in torrents would ease the thirst of our gods, I know those who have given feverishly to the glowing granites of Mexico the visions and palpitating appearance of masses of entrails and bones, an orgiastic, splendid, and mournful poem to butchery and death. Because some one said that one of us would consent to die to assure us life, I know those who have led without effort the bulls of our villages up to the summit of the naves which they built and suspended while swinging the blades of our harvests and the grapes of our vineyards around the capitols of stone which reared them up in the heavens. And I know those who have chosen to leap over the brazier of the sands and to cast down a rampart

of arrows and spears in order to put up flowering domes about a spring because one said to them that in washing our flesh we would wash our souls. All the builders obey in order to liberate our love.

The obedience to the word of the just man delivers us above all when there germinates of this word an army cuirassed with conquering virtues and solid egoisms around which all the currents of force and of faith concentrate themselves to make the future secure. The master, then, obeys like the slave, something more strong than the reason itself of the master and the faith of the slave, because this thing is the rhythm which has been prepared for them by long preceding generations and which conditions and surrounds their faith and their reason at the same time.

The eye of the master is the eye of the great common organism in the heart of which passions, interests, contradictory ideas live forever, certainly and with an accrued force, but whence there leaps, from their contradictions and their force itself, a profound æsthetic order upon the form of which the whole world, for an hour, is spontaneously in agreement. In the universal disorder, the master is blind, because he is himself an element of that universal disorder, and the clear-sighted poet transgresses his orders, or despises them, or ignores them. When the master is himself a poet—and this is the case in strong castes and aristocracies arrived at the legitimate apogee of their domination, in India, in Egypt, in China, in Japan, in the

Occident of the Middle Ages—the poet is the more docile as the warrior is the more bold of his arms. But, more than the warrior who often carries on the material survivals of the dying order by his spirit itself, the poet is the guardian and the renewer of the profound organic order. And if he is, in critical moments, the least obedient of all, if he is the most obedient in religious moments—because faith, in him, remains unshakable—his work constitutes, whenever the organism constitutes itself, in concentrating its energies, the first element of order, and when the organism is achieved, the first element of disorder, by stopping the mystery, up to then diffused in souls, in order to submit it to judgment. But it is his work also, from all eternity and to all eternity, and whatever may happen, that is the sole moment of balance in the heart of disorder and the highest expression of balance in the heart of the social order.

V

Every equilibrium, by the fact even that it exists, presupposes antagonistic elements which one may call parties in political language, classes in social language, castes in religious language, functions in biological language, forces in mechanical language, masses in plastic language. I should not be surprised that the universal equilibrium, with its central element which remains fixed and formed and its peripheral element which seeks to

fly and remains imprisoned in the orbit of this attraction, was the primary model which it is necessary to reproduce. And it was this equilibrium which we have named God. God indifferent, monstrous, an artist to say everything, not knowing that the blood runs and the spheres shake, intoxicated with the dance and music of the worlds and playing with the suns. Nothing is divine, except equilibrium. An equilibrium always unstable, always becoming, always conquered, always broken, dynamic I repeat. Art for the head, the master—and for man when it concerns his own organism—consists in pursuing and maintaining this equilibrium. And it is for the artist to realize this, in the poem in which the sensible universe confusedly enters to teach him to obey it. The chief, the master, the man, the artist, are all defined by this tyrannic function which consists in dominating by the spirit the forces to be organized. Each of them is, himself alone, an aristocracy and a multitude. And as every new social organism should restrain itself in order to harmonize the powers struggling in society, with a severity toward itself of which each failure is marked by a check, he who produces the poem and he who dreams of action are alike condemned, by the practice toward themselves of the most cruel discipline, to put into their breasts a heart which can resist the solicitations of the forces which it is necessary to harmonize. Certainly, all make it beat, this heart, all shut it or tear it. No one more

than he who commands, is so sensible to glory, to friendship, to the thirst for love, to the horror of death. None participates more than he, by all his bleeding vitals, by all his nerves laid bare under the skin which burns and trembles, by his weaknesses, his defeats, his egotistic or generous impulses, in the constant breaks of equilibrium which produce themselves in himself and about him, and which hold back at every second he possesses that order which he sees in the chaos and which he aspires to fix there. It is precisely by this that the artist is known, who is nothing but the aspiration toward a new order, because his sensibility makes of his whole life an ennobling struggle against that fall into the abyss from which every one of his works is an effort to free himself.

Chapter Eight: A Plea for Three Criminals

I

I DO not love the first. He marches with a hard step, crushing the little plants and the cowering insects. His movements are slow and heavy, like a coupling-rod or a piston. He remains where one commands him to remain, without knowing why he remains. He goes where one tells him to go, without knowing wherefore he goes. He is disciplined like the beast of a herd, the herd of monsters. He is brutal in the mass and stupid when he is alone. He says all that he knows without shadings, without order, to those as well who do not ask him as to those who ask him. It is that he has learned everything from those who resemble him and which have as their mission to teach him everything. And he has exactly understood everything, without mystery, like a mechanism which one can mount and dismount. He is just, hence without pity. He is exact, hence without fantasy. He is precise, hence without the unexpected. He is strong, hence without indulgence. He is happy, hence without joy. He is obedient, hence without imagination. He is a believer, hence without spirit. He is a soldier, an accountant, a chemist, or a professor.

I do not love the second. He mixes himself up always in what does not concern him. He is defiant when he is weak, coarse when he is the stronger. He is sticky with dandruff and pomade. He wears green cravats or red, and tan shoes. He wears new clothes, with gold and diamonds on the fingers, and his feet are dirty. He speaks a ridiculous jargon, nasal or drawling, emphatic and hollow. He scatters about him a tepid chatter like sweat, or concentrates in a tense silence like a wolf-trap. He is common and vain. He offers you a soft and flexible hand, in order to put the other, rapid and sure, into the pocket of your coat. He believes himself irresistible, with reason. He knows nothing, and he imagines that he knows everything. He smells out nothing and he imagines that he smells out everything. In fact, yes: he knows how to cheat at cards, and smells badly. He is a merchant, a pimp, a servant, or an ambassador.

I do not love the third. He is doltish or awkward. He has a regular life, or rather a regulated life. A watch is in his skull, a thermometer in his breast, a row of pigeonholes in his belly, and a scarf about his neck. He is cultivated, certainly. He goes every year to the Salon, every week to the theater. He keeps himself posted, with his Review, in the "movement of ideas." He reads his two newspapers a day. He buys the novels that his critic points out to him. Because he has his critic, as he has his chemist or his professor.

He does not miss a first night, nor a lecture at the Sorbonne, nor an academic reception. He brays with enthusiasm before Beethoven and perspires with emotion before Rembrandt. But it is necessary that he should have his program, otherwise he will sneer and leave, protesting. He is sentimental in art, "honest man" in politics, man of order in social matters, realist in business, and positive in love. A patriot, in one word. He bores himself every Sunday. He bestows government decorations on others, or is decorated himself. He votes. He is elected. He bestows rewards. He presides at inaugural ceremonies. He is invested with authority. He is a shopkeeper, a functionary, a minister, a society man, or a retired business man.

I plead the innocence of the Barbarian, of the Half-Breed, and the Provincial.

II

Take care that these three states imply in fact a singular "innocence," and ask yourself if this "innocence" is not precisely what makes the freshness, the taste, and the constancy of the source of life and of resurrection. And before all, put in face of this the weariness of a secular culture, the universal doubt which it always determines, and as its inevitable consequences, the hesitation, the irresolution, the chronic lethargy after superficial excitement, the denial of the use of effort, the fear of taking risks, the fear of ridicule, the ironic atti-

tude toward affirmation, finally the impotence to act at all. Add to this, love become a weary gesture, trade a mechanical technique, art a superficial distraction or an interested enterprise, and as a consequence of this fall of the most noble of our functions into the bottom of the gulf without shadows of disenchantment or knowledge, the distraught ascension, to restore the balance, of restrictive morality and of the education of fear, of sin, of effacement, or of resignation. Penetrate more profoundly and farther into this mass, every day more inert, of which the outside has the seductive appearance of all that which the will, the feelings, the intelligence, the intuition, the method have accumulated in many centuries, in the word and the sound, the color and the form, in the idea and the action of the most harmonious and the most potent, the most living and the most rare. Go on to the essential manifestations of that secret force which gives to the heart and the soul mingled, by the poem, the picture or the symphony, their form the most perfect. You will see that those who call themselves, against the Barbarian, against the Half-Breed, against the Provincial, the spiritual guardians of the most pure tradition, arrive always in the strange epochs where extreme culture is only a breath without lungs, a smile without a face, a perfume without a flower, to immobilize the soul in the so-called traditional bounds of the intelligence which the flame has abandoned

and of a method which turns in a circle without being fed from without. You will see pure intelligence ending, directly and squarely, by making the best qualified representatives of culture into imperturbable fools. You will hear them bray, one after the other, or altogether, their worn-out theorems. They dig up a fossil bone, and believe the animal to be alive. They describe a statue and believe themselves the sculptor. They pull a verse to pieces and believe themselves to be the poet. They scrape a violin, and believe themselves to be the composer. Their foolishness is incredible. One of them said to me, one day, that a bachelor of arts of to-day knew more of philosophy than Aristotle. He ignored that the one lived the idea, while the idea was merely put into the other. Such people do not know that it is no longer a question of using the intelligence, but of recreating it.

The "tradition" is an excuse which the mediocre and perfect artist in the times of the renewal of the world invokes in order to justify a work which his power does not support. It is a well-made support to prevent his foot from slipping and his chin from dropping. He does not see that the veritable tradition is only a framework incessantly modified by spiritual preoccupations and technical processes common to an epoch or a people, a framework that great beings periodically break down to please themselves and oblige their successors to rebuild without response.

III

I do not wish to remember that the Provincial in Greece made terra-cotta statues of which the grace is undying, that the Half-Breed sells stuffs striped with glittering tones, and places before you, with an enchanting smile, pots, jewels, ivories, whence the powerful perfume of exotic worlds pours out as water seeping through soil, and that the sound of cymbals, of flutes, and of drums guides the steps of the Barbarian when he comes as invader. Be they blind and dumb—and above all if they are blind and dumb—it is in them that innocence rests, and if I absolve them, it is because they represent for me—who love nothing but intelligence—against dead intelligence, the hope of that cry of love with which the new-born intelligence will swell the heart of my sons.

When I mentioned the trades of the Barbarian, I forgot that one who casts down from their pedestals the rotted gods, who achieves ruins, who breaks the tables of the Law before which the green lawyers nod solemnly while the old lawyers smear them, sneeringly. When I mentioned the trades of the Half-Breed, I forgot that one who comes to sow passion into men's hearts, revolt into their consciences, who sneaks, knife in teeth, about the bad judge, the bad priest, the bad shepherd, who dies on a cross without complaint, with a fixed and sweet smile. When I mentioned the trades of the Provincial I forgot that one who is every day

struggling with the matter of things, who draws out the metal and the carbon of the mines, who forges the tool, and uses it, who digs and burrows the soil to make bread and wine.

Is this all? It is not nothing, at all events. While the Provincial stirs up the cinders of war to fatten his soil, while the Half-Breed blows up the spark which threatens to enkindle peace, the fresh torrent of the Barbarian puts out the fire of peace or drowns the cinders of war. It is by these that the profound movements of the masses are made. It is their migrations and their passages, their continued and subtle infiltrations, their risings from the depth of the abyss of ignorance and of poverty, the rapid exchanges which the one makes to the other across fallen social barriers, the violation of national frontiers, worldly or artistic prejudices ignored, which cover the deserts of used-up civilizations, with waves of the depths sufficiently heavy with water and salt to carry away their vices and flood them with harvests. From the mixture of all these bloods, all these innocences, all these passions, all these vices, is born an irresistible ferment and by itself a new blood, a new innocence, a new passion and a new vice, an enormous mass of curiosities and illusions. The sum of these rottennesses is of an unknown innocence. The fire burns and runs over the vapors of the swamp. Certainly, the chaotic crowd, vicious and believing, in which the Provincial, the Barbarian, and the Half-Breed jostle, is made of ignorances,

of ingenuities, of impulses, of associated superstitions. All are frustrated, or rude, or awkward, candidly good or cruel. They have no artistic imagination, but solid tools well in the hand. They have no skill in love, but beget many children. And since they ignore both woman and form, they hurl themselves upon one and the other to cast life into their flanks.

IV

I swear that I do not lie. History covers me. And I have no need to seek for examples. The Assyrians destroyed Babylonia, and the dense black statues with hands clasped over the belt in which the Chaldean art attained its highest expression, possible expression of force and rigor. But they refertilized the spirit of the country of rivers, and made enter into the rigid framework fixed by the Babylonian sculptors their terrible art, wild beasts bloody and torn by wounds, nervous horses, arrows, lances cutting the sky, decapitated corpses, the most powerful hymn that exists to the redoubtable life of the warrior and the hunter. The Dorians came to destroy the palaces of Argolis, of which the frescoes told with so much verve and fire the sensual and conquering life of the pirates of the Archipelago, painted women, sonorous collars and bracelets, gold masks, bulls of silver. But it is because of the fresh blood that they poured into the burning veins of doubtful virgins sold by the merchants of Ionia, that the resplendent mythology

of the Greeks, the Homeric poems, the ode, the tragedy, the great heroic sculpture of Olympia and the Parthenon flowered in the heart of man, on the narrow plains of Attica and the Peloponnesus, between the dark gulfs of azure and the rusty hills of gold. Not a single carved stone existed in the depths of India before the Macedonian dragged, in the heavy furrow of his phalanxes, toward the edge of the monstrous forest where the sacred rivers rolled down seed-corn and rottenness, some marble-workers or image-makers ignorant of the sacred mysteries of the Vedas. The Gallo-Roman world had gathered together in the theaters and in the baths of its cities, in the villas of its countryside, all that the robust freshness of the Latin sensuality, the reasoning harmony of Hellenic intelligence, the unseizable and aërial poetry of the Celtic soul could combine of the new. The Visigoths, the Huns, the Burgundians, the Arabs, the Franks arrived, sterilizing the very soil under the hoofs of their horses. But from the contact with their mysticism, of their music, of their white or yellow flesh with the white or swarthy flesh, and the logic and the plastics of the Armorican, Belgian, or Celticized Mediterranean peoples, the cathedral sprang up. The splendid and apotheosized Italy of the Empire is nothing but cinders and smoke after the chronic flood that the German tribes poured out from the hills of the Alps to the Cisalpine plains and over the flanks of the Apennines. But the white man has mated with the brunette, and from the

maternal flanks leaped in a flood of blood and light, the child called Dante or Petrarch, Brunelleschi or Donatello, della Quercia or Masaccio, Ucello or Signorelli, Leonardo or Galileo, Michael Angelo or Titian.

So much for the Barbarian.

Observe now the man with velvety black eyes, the man with white teeth, with a red cruel smile, with hair crisped and shining with perfumed oil, who roams about in all the ports of Hellas and Italy, of Sicily and Africa, of Gaul and Spain with striped stuffs, glass, figures of terra-cotta, amulets, rings of gold and bracelets of silver. Follow, in the childish head of the fisherman blackened with the sun, whose feet have become like horn, his hands like bark, his skin leather, the work of curiosity, then envy, then desire of imitation, and the new freshness and savor which the appearances of men, of beasts, of plants, of stones which he crosses upon his road take on. And represent to yourselves his joy and the lyric form which it takes on when he commences to find the expressions which he gives to his own feeling more alive, more virile, more animated than the trumpery scattered about by the Phœnician merchant. Accompany to Rome the Greek statuary, sophist and actor, try to discover, under the contempt that they inspire, their subterranean work of initiation, of insinuation which you can then follow, word for word, stone for stone, idea for idea, into the Odes of Horace, the Georgics of Virgil, the Annals of

Tacitus, up to the running decorations of Pompeii and to the pure theaters of the Sicilian hills, facing the shining sea, up to the germination, in the blood of the martyrs of the circus, of the irresistible feeling which will remake the world. Take part, at Alexandria, in the subtle and passionate disputes of the Jewish rabbi, of the Athenian professor, of the Roman rhetorician, of the last Egyptian spirit, and you will assist at the crystallization of the spiritual synthesis which will permit this sentiment to unite the hearts of the miserable, the feelings of women, the doctrines of the priesthood, and the arms of the warriors. Walk, in Sicily and on the Adriatic coast, in the footsteps of the mosaicist and the Byzantine mason, and you will discover that which permitted the French cathedral to find, in order to rise so high in love and space, the skeleton of stone of its nave and its spires, and to Giotto to introduce, for the first time in the confused sensations of western and northern Europe, the intellectual order of the south and the east. Is it necessary to uncover the trace, in the sensual poem which is deployed on all the walls of the churches and palaces of Venice, of the merchant of Constantinople and of Cyprus, of the commercial traveler of Smyrna and Beyrout, of the agricultural importer of Syria and of Corfu? And do you wish more direct, though more narrow, arguments? The language of Pascal's and Montaigne's mothers was Provençal and not French. And, more: Montaigne came from British immigrants,

and perhaps from Jewish usurers. Dürer, the summit of German painting, was of Hungarian origin. Beethoven, the summit of German music, was born of a Flemish father.

So much for the Half-Breed.

The influence of the Provincial is less easy to discover, because it is subterranean, and diffused, and yet constant, like that of the air in the lungs, of food in the stomach, of solar heat on the skin. It is the people who make the language, and each time that a formed culture takes hold of the language, anæmia, paralysis, cachexia, seize upon the word. Note the savor of the Latin speech—that of Plautus or Lucretius—before the so-called classic age which pretended to fix it; the savor of spoken French—that of Villon or Rabelais—before the so-called classic age which pretended to purify it; the savor of the English tongue—that of Chaucer or Shakespeare—before the so-called classic age which pretended to prune it. This is the object in its substance, concrete, with its loves, its blood, its flesh if it is living, and if it is inert its grain, its framework of wood, of stone, the water which swells it and its odor. For it is he who holds it all day long between his rude hands, who names and describes it.

I wandered one day on the Acropolis with a young Greek artist very much alive, although cultured. He recited to me in low tones the curses of Prometheus, then translated them to me all fresh and palpitating in direct French, very slangy, but hardly incorrect. Then he sang to me contempo-

rary peasant songs of Attica, or of Thessaly—or perhaps of Bœotia—which he translated also in turn, in the same nude speech. The rhythm, the idea, and the image, all were the same, in the one case, undoubtedly enkindled by passion and intelligence, in the other stammering and awkward and naïve. But equal. I thought of the little blue or red houses of the Piræus, which I had perceived from the boat, in the morning, with their square façades and their triangular fronts, and of those which I had loved, some days before, amid the olives and the cypresses of Corfu—a cube of plaster with four trunks of trees at the four angles, supporting four beams on which a poor roof rested. And as I found myself at that moment behind the Erictheion, on the border of the plateau of the citadel, I saw, while keeping my ears open to the involuntary understanding of the peasant and the hero, the palaces of the modern city, inspired by the classic monuments of the Hellas of Ictinus. I remarked that the hovel of the Piræus and the farmhouses of Corfu were more nearly parents of the house of Zeus or of Athena than the pompous silhouettes of the University, the Museum, and the Academy. And I saw again the dances of Eleusinian peasants similar to those which go about the vases of Corinth. And pottery, and tapestry, and all the popular industry of Persia and of China, of India, of Africa, of Holland, of France, or elsewhere. And I asked myself if the true tradition were not the appanage of the organic depths of

peoples, even when they appear to be silent forever, even when they have touched the bottom of the saddest and most complete downfall that can be imagined.

V

What is opposed to the Provincial? Culture in itself. What to the Half-Breed, the Barbarian? National culture. Now national culture is nothing but a provisory state of balance between the national elements which serve it as backbone and vitals, and the autochthonous or foreign elements which enter into its food. A state open to rupture by maladies from within or without and to re-establishments by organic reaction or foreign remedy. Beware of marriages of kinship if they keep on and repeat for more than two or three generations!

Classical French art, of all, is the most frequently invoked by the heralds of national culture. It is nothing but a harmonious compromise, rhythmed by the French sense of measure, between two centuries of Italian influence, two centuries of Latin-Greek humanism, and the persistence in the race of the concrete spirit of observation, realistic, somewhat scoffing, which has produced the mediæval image-maker, story-teller, and fabulist. This mediæval art is in itself nothing but a sudden fusion, in the popular Celtic crucible, of the musical and sensual soul of the Frank, of the structural and logical spirit of the Latin crystallized in the crossing of the pointed arches, and the flowering of

the capitals. French Romanticism is a change of horizon, brought about by the necessities of the hour, in the same man who looked toward the peninsula of the south when he had need of hard and direct materials for his spiritual structure, and who looked, despite himself, toward the somber forests and the foggy rivers of the north when he had need of humid air for his lungs, and of heavy blood for his arteries. Everywhere it is the same, in China, in Japan, in the Indies, in Persia, where the highest style is not born except from the meeting and agreement of the Greek and Hindu sculptor, of the Chinese and Persian painter, of the Japanese, Chinese, Persian potter and lacquerer, of the Arab architect, and of the profound multitude of workmen in art of all these people mixed together who, on every defined soil raised up everywhere in China, in India, in Japan, in Persia, an image of their desire which does not resemble that which is separated by the desert of Turkestan, the enormous Himalaya, and the sea from them.

What is then, in itself, this culture? A fashion of thinking and of saying which has no life and power, but on condition of being renewed by the ground-swell of mystical and popular passion, and which not remelted, nor retempered, isolates itself in intelligence, ignores new factors, and to avoid being attainted and plunging itself in the rising sea of new intuition rising from universal evolution, marches for a time in a circle, of which it does no more than brush the material bounds, then turns

toward its end in the void, slows up, stops, becomes a trickle, ossifies, and dies. Pure national culture? A form of self-abuse. Culture in itself? Asceticism. Perhaps there exist other means of living, and even of loving between these two.

A tree, after all, remains the tree that it is, even when it carries no more flowers. The artificial flowers which well-dressed gentlemen wisely pin to its branches do not give it the sap it asks to reflower. It is necessary to turn the soil about its roots, to call upon the winds and the rain, and at need, to cut the branches. Sometimes, happily, the Barbarian warrior and the Half-Breed merchant come to throw out the pedant, in order to give the watering-pot and the spade into the provincial gardener's hands.

VI

And will it be always so? Surely, in its great lines. Life changes its instruments and its decorations, but never its internal rhythm or essence. Man wears diverse clothes, but always the same heart.

Why should there not be forever, in this hemisphere or another, in this planet or another, in this solar system or another, old races and tired races, adult races and virile races, innocent races at the dawn of life, or if you do not wish more races, groups of men at a different level, those who decline exercising upon those who are uplifted the powerful appeal of vessels which communicate,

and by which living matter is precipitated in a cataract, breaking that which resists it and fecundating the mud accumulated at the bottom? Is it so difficult to imagine, in place of the flat and unwrinkled uniformity of the intelligence and of reason and morals, here a solitary island bearing a vigorous people of traders and sailors, tanned with salt, tanned with smoke, its head in the stars and its feet in cotton stuffs, but, because it isolates itself too much from the drama, exiles itself behind its reefs and its fleets of pacific or warlike invasion, does not often assist, in the intimacy of its conscience, in those breakings down of boundaries, across which the flame of the spirit leaps, bounds, destroys, retempers, and for that reason fixes itself and hardens itself under the cuirass of the rich man which prevents it from perceiving the universal renewal of ideas, of needs, of beliefs, of appetites, and of conquering faculties? Here, a cross-roads where lives a race vibrating to all the winds that traverse it, to all the waters that caress it, held down by all its nerves between the peoples who surround it and pour out on it at every moment, through war, through commerce, through lyricism, and through thought, to plow up its flanks, break its loins, humble its spirit, which closes and uncloses from one second to the other—that which makes men think, from one second to the other, that it is the first in the world, or dead—inventing harmonies proportional to the masses themselves of the materials which reach it, and

which can die smiling, or be reborn surlily, always detested, always adored, always misunderstood? Elsewhere, an amorphous and confused mass, but swollen with juices and blood about its heavy bones, without style, but full of life, and destined for this reason to leap upon its neighbors in order to ravish from them their style and to infuse into it their life, marking its mathematic step by the grandiose and voluntary rhythm of its musician heroes and condemned by destiny to fail in its action in order to fecundate the action of others, sowing ashes in order to raise grain, teaching always the dance, and not knowing how to dance, ignorant that it does not do always to say, let us dance, but that it is necessary to dance when the desire comes upon you, and that a dancer often takes rest, often weeps for weariness, and sometimes even curses the dance? Elsewhere, nearer to the sun, and deeper in history, a race always alive, even when it lives in ruins and contempt, attaining at times, and often in the same spirit, the summits of idealism and the bottom of trickery, tearing at its breast to seek there a heart swollen with egotistical passions, and lifting it to the eyes of men in order to galvanize them with the spectacle of the energy and the fruitfulness of its passions, a harp of iron with strings of gold on which its bloody fingers are stretched? And beyond the oceans, a violent upheaval, rising in the same eddy with the sureness of a stream, of these old peoples transplanted and multiplying by their contact their force declining

elsewhere, launched direct as a tram, cutting as a ship, candid as an irresistible monster, virtuous by faith, immoral by action, conquering and indifferent to the object of its conquest, not thinking any more of taking and keeping, but only of affirming its expansive power, of marching in great steps toward no matter what end in the light of the morning? And more near than these in space, in the center about which the Occidental spirit gravitated for thirty centuries, but farther, farther in time, whether in advance, or behind, as coming from the depths of a confused abyss of dream, of despair, of mystic or nomad sensuality, sounds of indecisive music, the sounds of chains and of wind in the reeds, something that trembles like an embryonic mass in the depths of the seas, which pushes toward an obscure future its hesitating tentacles, draws them back at the contact of the fire, or lets them burn carelessly, and which passes without transition or remorse from the most generous illusions to the most foolish slaughters? And behind this, of which this is only the advance guard, the enormous continent in which a thousand million men ferment, the inexhaustible nightmare of feverish dream in which all the possible forms of lyricism and of religion sleep in the torpor of the senses, worn out with opium and fasting, with some cruel flashes of will intercrossing and rejoining one another by turns up to the day when this will be like an electric field, full of thunders and lightnings, which are spread everywhere? And

why should it disappear, or not be replaced by another, that people scattered and diffused without another country than its most vile interest, without another law than its most sublime passion, a formidable ferment which destroys every dying faith, animates every faith being born, a fire which rallies all the slaves revolted against the letter and reclaiming the spirit, demanding millions of spiritual criminals to nourish a single free man, hating art which it seeks without ceasing to destroy by brokerage, caricature, and taste, a frantic love of justice which it seeks unceasingly to create by apostleship and martyrdom—servitor of art and destroyer of justice by its power of imprinting, upon all that it touches the movement, the instability, the disquiet, the silent drama of the heart . . . ? Almost all Barbarians for their neighbors, all Half-Breeds the one for the other, all composed below by a throng of Provincials, and above by an *élite* either too aware or too tired of its culture, some Provincials in mass, others poisoned to the roots by rotten civilization, mixing itself here, pushing itself back there, hardened in their egoism or impatient to make itself, but all submitted to the flux, the reflux, the movement of trade, of ideas, of words and of wars. You wish for unity? So be it. It exists, for all that, but spiritual, high and far in the hope that flies, subtle, unseizable as the fire of the brain, above the complex and complicated mass of organs and members which nourished it and carried it, and do not

cease to nourish it and carry it. And this is what I foresee.

VII

The struggle is always produced between an intellectual rationalism worn out by the noblest conquests, and a social mysticism fed by the most violent appetites. The social mysticism, elaborated by the Barbarians, carried and subtilized by Half-Breeds, finds everywhere a favorable field in the hearts of those of the Provincials who have never quitted, for the sterilizing instrument of culture, the iron tool which gives bread and salt. Let me question every decisive epoch in the past or in the present. There is always some Saint Paul stopping at the fixed principles about which the crowds suffering for justice and hunger revolve. Always some Julian the Apostate attempting to revivify the idols in ruins, but loving too much himself the idols which have been sketched out to succeed in an enterprise which he does not believe in. Always some Epictetus knowing that it is stupid to espouse a traditionalism which has made the tour of itself, and useless to struggle against the Barbarian who is coming and the Provincial who uprises, and so shutting himself up in the solitary play of his contemplative pride. There is always some Cæsar using his mystic power to throw the fanatic Barbarian at the conquest of the future. God knows his own, all his own, who are precisely the Provincial, the Half-Breed, and the Barbarian.

The pretexts which renew faith, the expansion of faith, the defense of culture, are only means of adaptation, to new circumstances and events. A Barbarism of class or of race, a culture of class or of race, a mysticism marching behind moral idols, or behind material idols, or behind scientific idols, a political ideal, a religion, a social system, always a mass which believes because it does not possess, an *élite* which does not believe because it possesses. And the one always kills the other, because the hunger for possession gives a more daring courage than the spirit of conservation. And by this it purifies and initiates, because the pyres which it lights to destroy corpses attract the wanderer.

The Barbarian, the Half-Breed, and the Provincial, who so often call upon morality, justice, and peace, represent, you say, the contrary of morality, justice, and peace? So be it. They represent all this in the eyes of men on the day when they have exhausted the life of the new world which they innocently inaugurated. For the Christians of to-day, the Christians of the catacombs represent incarnate morality, justice, and peace against dying paganism. We know what one should think of this simplified opinion. The primitive forms of the spiritual communion from which arose one of the highest forms of civilization, were then manifested by the burning of Rome, and by confused fornications in the promiscuity of darkness and religious delirium.

There is everywhere in the field of social war,

of which foreign war has never been but a screen or a means, the same mistake as about foreign war: we make a sentimental or finalist judgment about it. Reality is quite otherwise. Men say to those who have uprisen from slavery on the flood of despair and of need: "You wish to take that which is ours? Now, you are neither moral, nor the majority, nor law, nor written right." This is what they might say: "You are the majority? What matter, if we feel the fetters and not you? You are the law? What matter, if we are the force? You are the written right? What matter, if we are the living right? You are morality? What matter, if we are love?" All the régimes die because those who are on high pursue, in the shadow of dead symbols, individual interests, while those who are below pursue, in the light of symbols being born, their collective interests.

VIII

And now, it is to those who are below that I turn myself.

All the suffering crowds have hated from time to time the imperialism which represents the agonizing international idea, in order to become imperialists themselves, as soon as they could substitute for this idea the international idea being born. There has been, and there is, no other means of making a simple and living idea penetrate into the spirit of one's neighbor. This is the history of

Buddhism, the history of Judaism, the history of Christianity, the history of Islam, the history of the Reformation, the history of the Revolution. The divine spirit always fights ruling Imperialism in order to substitute its own.

But what matter the illusions of those who throw themselves into conquest? They do not aim except at power, a sentimental empire above all, a material empire following, a spiritual empire afterward. Imperialism is as old as the world. It will last as long as the world lasts. It is the internal force of a group of individuals which is conscious of itself, and annexes, in view of a work unknown to them, other groups of individuals to increase and infuse that force. Before yesterday it was theocratic or feudal, yesterday monarchic, to-day national or democratic or economic, it will be to-morrow socialist, collectivist, communist. What matter? It will be. It is not the just and the good men who struggle against the wicked and the unjust; it is the Imperialism of the future against the Imperialism of to-day. If there were no more than two men on the earth, Imperialism would rule there.

Imperialism is altogether spirit. Otherwise it is nothing but a painful caricature of its true image, a crooked old man covered with weapons, painted, his hair dyed. Whenever a class, in the heart of a people, increases from the increase itself of that people, and tends to take on power, its Imperialism resumes the sum of ideas, of passions, of

intelligence and energy that this people represents. It has no living value except that this people is alive. Imperialism is the organization of the reflux in the universal soul, of those confused forces which the universal soul has thrown into the soul of the people. And it is natural that in the heart of this people itself certain ones do not see anything but the universal soul, and deny in its name the soul of another people which has as its mission to rejoin it across war and sorrow. But the soul of a people does not tend to destroy the universal soul because it wishes to impress upon it its movement; the universal soul does not tend to destroy the soul of a people because it wishes to realize it, any more than the whole of music destroys the work of a Beethoven, or the work of Beethoven the whole of music. Imperialism, wherever it is manifested, has always represented an international idea, which the most living people seeks to make enter, by its force, or its lyricism, into the common patrimony.[1]

Profound patriotism, which is ready not only for the most terrible sacrifices, but above all for the most perilous adventures; not only for defense, but above all for conquest; not only to manifest a desire of conservation, but above all of creation—does not emerge from the breast of a people except when that people is animated by a spirit which passes its own frontiers, in order to show all

[1] Count du Fels has shown in the "New Europe" in August, 1919, analogous ideas in perfect terms.—E. F.

men the powerful life of its heart. It is active, an invader, and dynamic. This is the patriotism of Tyrtæus and Æschylus, of Moses and of Saint Paul, of Paulus Æmilius and of Cato, of Godfrey of Bouillon and of Saint Louis, of Luther and Loyola, of Cromwell and Gustavus Adolphus, of Michelet and of Carlyle, of Walt Whitman and Dostoevsky. It is spirit, again a stroke. It represents always precisely because it vibrates on the lyre and the sword of a people, an idea soaring above the people. It is the spirit of the Jewish race which made claim to be the chosen people, charged to bring the true law to the Gentiles. It is the spirit of the Greeks, dispersed almost everywhere like dust, but resolved sometimes again like bronze when it feels the idea that it makes gleam and shine, of harmony and reason, again menaced. It is that of the Roman people bearing, by the aqueduct and the legion, water, law, and peace to all the peoples of the earth. It is that of the Arab people, stopping its horse and raising its tent in every place where one can open to the Infidel the gates of the pure spirit. It is that of the French people, animating the gesture of God to deliver the tomb whence is risen the idea of the unanimous commune in the hope of eternity. It is that of the Spanish people, defending the Catholic idea of order in the hierarchy and in faith against that of the Swedish people defending the Protestant idea of order in discipline and in conscience. It is that of the French people, imposing by mon-

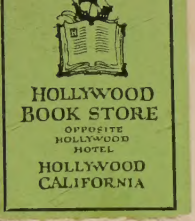
archy the unitary idea of Europe in order to better bring them the idea of equality by the Revolution. It is that of the English people, exporting in the powers of its accounts and its fleets the idea of responsibility and of political liberty up to the borders of the seas. It is that of the German people, confiding to its soldiers and its professors the exclusive duty of teaching to the universe an idea of collective organization of richness and wisdom. It is that of the American people, sure of being called to life to ordain universal peace by the power of its factories and the force of its arsenals. It is that of the Russian people, thirsty for murder and martyrdom to announce fraternity to the world.

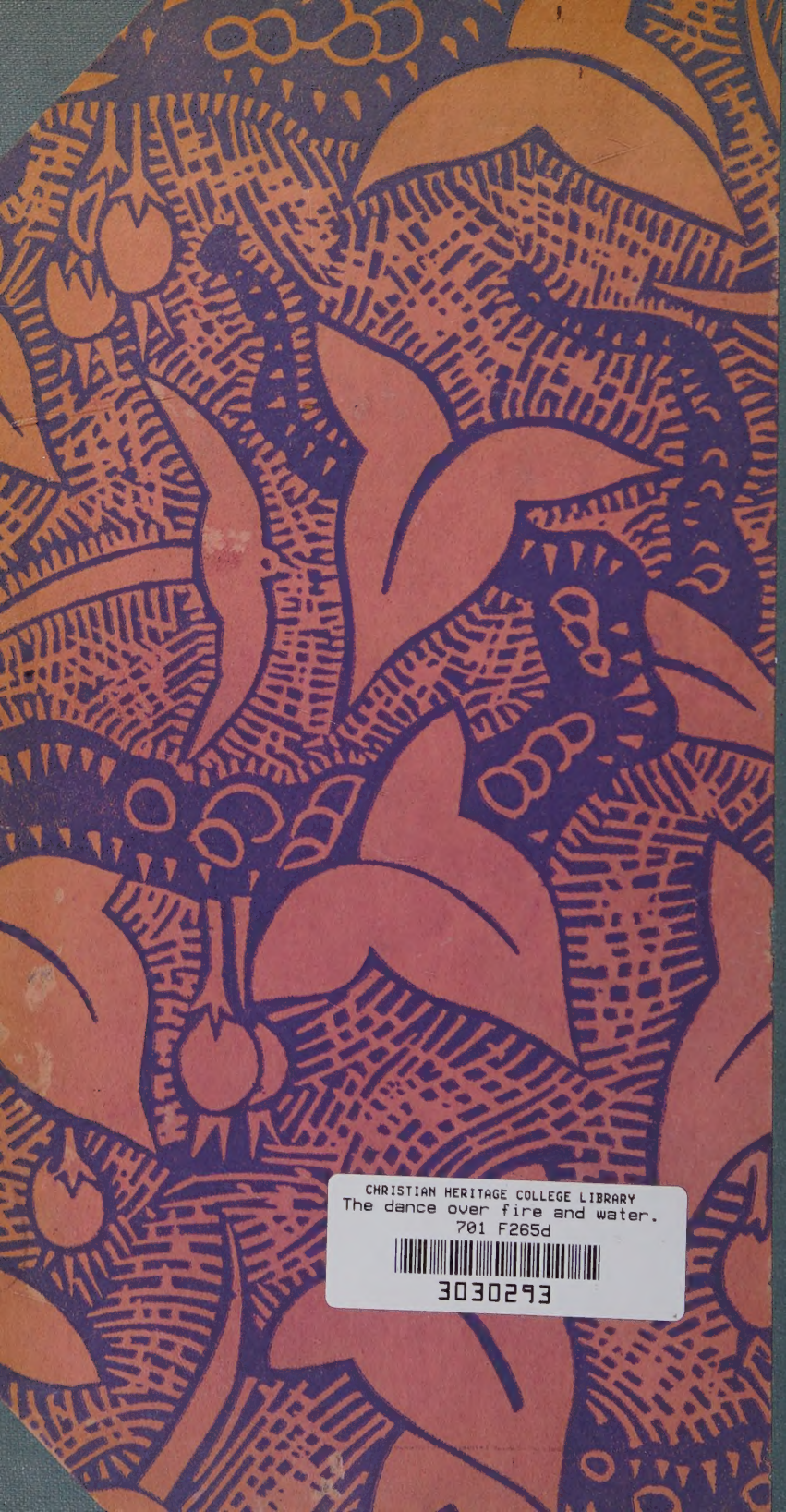
IX

Those who have never assisted at the rise of crowds in History, say that these crowds which arise are vowed to defeat because they ignore or despise all the effort of men before them. And it is true that they despise or ignore it. But see, they are hungry. Hungry for bread, hungry for love. Have you seen that which passes in you every time that you gain a victory? Have you ever loved a woman and obtained her avowal of love? Have you ever felt being born and swelling in your breast the lyric exaltation of a triumph obtained over your impulses? Very well! I tell you that when it is a crowd that struggles and conquers the prey for which it has fought, it is that

lyric exaltation which covers its soil entirely with temples and altars. All sing, all build, and all hearts beating together flood with such life the secret God that inhabits them, that His form appears.

THE END


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